

# **Sen McCray Letter for Senate Budget and Tax SB0646**

Uploaded by: Amy Dorman

Position: FAV

Dear Senator McCray,

Greetings! I am Amy Dorman and I am writing to you today, as the principal at Monocacy Valley Montessori Public Charter School (MVMPCS), to thank you for sponsoring SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#). MVMPCS was the first charter school in Maryland when it opened in the fall of 2002. We have consistently provided a high-quality Montessori education to Frederick County Public School students. In the fall of 2022, we began planning our school expansion to include an innovative Montessori high school program. We will welcome our first cohort of high school students in fall 2023. We would not have been able to achieve this goal without the sizable grant awarded by the Maryland State Department of Education to support “the expansion of existing high-quality public charter schools.” The drain on our resources due to covering facilities costs inhibits this type of innovation.

As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why this bill is essential to pass. Maryland public charter schools are an integral part of the public school portfolio in Maryland, serving more than 24,000 students statewide. The communities with public charter schools, the teachers and staff that work there, the districts that include them, and the students that attend them would all benefit directly from the much needed funding SB0646 would supply.

LEAs are able to utilize capital funding and general funds from other sources, not available to public charter schools, to support their facilities, operations, & maintenance. SB0646 seeks to establish a fund managed by the IAC that allows public charter schools to apply for up to \$2000 per pupil annually for eligible facilities-related expenses. This funding does not impact the Blueprint formula or take funding away from any other public school students, as the funding would come from the State’s General Fund. Instead, SB0646 will allow more Blueprint dollars to be spent IN the classroom on learning instead of ON the school’s facility. It also sets strong parameters around spending accountability and transparency while ensuring there is standard bond bill language on repayment if a school should close or sell a privately-owned building.

Charter school students are public school students and they deserve to be educated in safe, welcoming, adequate school buildings just like their traditional public school peers. Just because a family decides to send their children to a public charter school and stay in the public school system, why do they have to attend, on average, an older, more in need of repair, discarded building? Why do charter school teachers have to teach in buildings that do not have adequate space, amenities, or supports? Why do charter school operators have to pull funding out of their Blueprint dollars to pay for their buildings, while traditional schools & LEAs pull from capital funding and general funds? Bottom line, it isn’t equitable. Through your support, we can work to close inequities public charter school students, families, and teachers experience in their school buildings every day.

This year we celebrate 20 years of the charter school law in Maryland. It is about time we get to work funding public charter school facilities. We look forward to the hearing on March 7th and your support of SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. Please know that it is not only myself, but the larger charter school community across the state of more than 24,000 families, 50 schools in seven districts standing behind you.

Thank you,  
Amy Dorman

**Dear Senator\_MVM.pdf**

Uploaded by: Andrew Pilahome

Position: FAV

Dear Senator,

I am Andrew Pilahome and I am writing to you today, as a/the parent at Monocacy Valley Montessori Charter School, to ask you for your support of SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray.

As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why this bill is essentially to pass. Maryland public charter schools are an integral part of the public school portfolio in Maryland, serving more than 24,000 students statewide. The communities with public charter schools, the teachers and staff that work there, the districts that include them, and the students that attend them would all benefit directly from the much needed funding SB0646 would supply.

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Thank you,

Andrew Pilahome

# **Chesapeake Public Charter School Written Testimony**

Uploaded by: Angela Funya

Position: FAV



Chesapeake Charter School Alliance, LTD (CCSA)  
20945 Great Mills Road, Suite 501  
Lexington Park, MD 20653  
Phone (301) 863-9585  
Fax (301) 863-9586  
[schools.smcps.org/cpcs/alliance](http://schools.smcps.org/cpcs/alliance)

March 6, 2023

Members Of The Senate Budget And Tax Committee,

My name is Angela Funya and I am providing this written testimony to you today, as the Charter Director, along with Sandy Imbriale, the Education Director of Chesapeake Public Charter School, to ask you for your support of SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray. Chesapeake Public Charter School was established in 2007 in St. Mary's County, MD. We are a K-8 Arts and Environmental integration charter school that focuses on the whole child. Since our inception in 2007 we have grown our enrollment from 160 to 540 students, a testimony to our success and the desire for choice in public education in our county. The Chesapeake Charter School Alliance is our governing body and purchased our facility through a USDA rural facilities program in 2015 for 3.5 million dollars. Our students outperform the local LEA and the state of Maryland on standardized assessments historically. Our demographics have continued to reflect the diversity of the community we serve, and our lottery is weighted to prioritize economically disadvantaged students as allowed by MD Charter School law. We continue to provide this opportunity without capital funding support. The Alliance supports our facility through the per pupil operating budget allocated to us as outlined in our charter agreement with St. Mary's Public Schools. This is approximately 1 million dollars that could be spent on staffing, materials and programs for public school students, and support the teacher salary incentives mandated by Maryland's Blueprint.

As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why this bill is essentially to pass. Maryland public charter schools are an integral part of the public school portfolio in Maryland, serving more than 24,000 students statewide. The communities with public charter schools, the teachers and staff that work there, the districts that include them, and the students that attend them would all benefit directly from the much needed funding SB0646 would supply.

LEAs are able to utilize capital funding and general funds from other sources, not available to public charter schools, to support their facilities, operations, & maintenance. SB0646 seeks to establish a fund managed by the IAC that allows public charter schools to apply for up to \$2000 per pupil annually for eligible facilities-related expenses. This funding does not impact the Blueprint formula or take funding away from any other public school students, as the funding would come from the State's General Fund. Instead, SB0646 will allow more Blueprint dollars to be spent IN the classroom on learning instead of ON the school's facility. It also sets strong parameters around spending accountability and transparency while ensuring there is standard bond bill language on repayment if a school should close or sell a privately-owned building.

Charter school students are public school students and they deserve to be educated in safe, welcoming, adequate school buildings just like their traditional public school peers. Just because a family decides to send their children to a public charter school and stay in the public school system, why do they have to attend, on average, an older, more in need of repair, discarded building? Why do charter school teachers have to teach in buildings that do not have adequate space, amenities, or supports? Why do charter school operators have to pull funding out of their Blueprint dollars to pay for their buildings, while traditional schools & LEAs pull from capital funding and general funds? This isn't equitable. Through your support, we can work to close inequities public charter school students, families, and teachers experience in their school buildings every day.

This year we celebrate 20 years of the charter school law in Maryland. It is about time we get to work funding public charter school facilities. We look forward to the hearing on March 7th and your support of SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. Please know that it is not only myself, but the larger charter school community across the state of more than 24,000 families, 50 schools in seven districts standing behind you.

Sincerely,

Angela Funya  
Charter Director  
Chesapeake Public Charter School

Sandy Imbriale  
Education Director  
Chesapeake Public Charter School

# **SB 646 Dailey Favorable.pdf**

Uploaded by: Anne Marie Dailey

Position: FAV

**Budget and Taxation Committee**

**March 7, 2023**

**SB 646 - FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and distinguished members of the committee,

Thank you for opportunity to share with you my **favorable position on SB 646**, which would provide for the establishment of a fund for charter school facilities in Maryland. I am writing to you today as a former Treasurer and Board Member at Chesapeake Charter School Alliance, which is the governing board of Chesapeake Public Charter School (CPCS) in Lexington Park, St. Mary's County.

Right now, charter schools are spending their PPA Blueprint Dollars and/or fundraising to pay for facilities costs. There is no additional funding for public charter schools, and as a result, there is less PPA funding being spent on actual education in charter schools. LEAs have access to PPA Blueprint Dollars, their District General Fund, and Capital Funding to pay for operations, maintenance, and other facilities related expenses. This is a significant equity issue in public school facilities funding.

This bill would allow for the opportunity for public charter school students, teachers, families, and staff to have the same facility experience as their traditional peers who are attending 21st Century Schools, updated buildings, and state of the art learning environments. It is incredibly unfair that they are left out of feeling safe, secure, and supported while at school and work due to a lack of funding to public charter schools for facilities.

The funding for this program would come from the State's General Fund. It does not take money from the LEA capital funding or per pupil funding allocated for LEAs. It has a fiscal note of approximately \$48 million annually if every school maxed out their possible reimbursement.

This year we celebrate 20 years of the charter school law in Maryland. It is about time we get to work funding public charter school facilities. I can tell you as former treasurer, this bill would prevent a possible precarious financial position for CPCS in the future. It is a struggle have to take money out of school operations to pay for facility costs. I hope you will support SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. Our charter school community thanks you!

Sincerely,

Anne Marie Dailey  
California, MD  
[daileyam@gmail.com](mailto:daileyam@gmail.com)

# Untitled document.pdf

Uploaded by: Ariel Polk

Position: FAV

- March 6, 2023
- **RE: SB0646 School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment**
- Dear Senator,
- I am Ariel Polk, a parent/ volunteer of Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School in Frederick County, Maryland. I am writing to you today to ask you for your support of SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray.
- As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why it is essential that this bill passes.
- FCPS Public Charter Schools are excellent. All three charters attained a 5-star rating on the 2019 Maryland Report Card, in company with only 9 (of 37) other FCPS elementary schools. Yet the future of Frederick County's Public Charter Schools is in jeopardy because of a lack of adequate and affordable facilities. Carroll Creek Montessori, a public charter school in Frederick County that educates 318 students, has been actively searching for an affordable, safe facility solution for more than a decade. There is consistent interest in our school with an extensive waiting list each year. We currently have 1938 applicants with a week remaining for application to our lottery for approximately 35 spots.
- Frederick's public Montessori charter school buildings offer inadequate classroom size, no gymnasium, no kitchen, no cafeteria, and no outdoor green space. In addition, fully 18% of the annual budget for Carroll Creek Montessori and 15% of the annual budget for Monocacy Valley Montessori goes to private landlords instead of to initiatives that directly support student learning, which is where the money would go in a traditional public school. Both Montessori schools have accepted offers on buildings, but we are learning during our due diligence work that budgetary limitations may prevent or limit our ability to renovate either of the buildings. We are still without a quality, long-term solution because of budget constraints.
- LEAs are able to utilize capital funding and general funds from other sources, not available to public charter schools, to support their facilities, operations, & maintenance. SB0646 seeks to establish a fund managed by the IAC that allows public charter schools to apply for up to \$2000 per pupil annually for eligible facilities-related expenses. This funding does not impact the Blueprint formula or take funding away from any other public school students, as the funding would come from the State's General Fund. Instead, SB0646 will allow more Blueprint dollars to be spent IN the classroom on learning instead of ON the school's facility. It also sets strong parameters around spending accountability and transparency while ensuring there is standard bond bill language on repayment if a school should close or sell a privately-owned building.
- We look forward to the hearing on March 7th and your support of SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. Please know that it is not only myself, but the larger charter school community across the state of more than 24,000 families, 50 schools in seven districts standing behind you.
- Thank you,  
Ariel Polk  
6668 Seagull Ct  
Frederick, MD 21703

# Written Testimony .pdf

Uploaded by: Ashley Pilahome

Position: FAV

Dear Senator,

I am Ashley Pilahome and I am writing to you today, as a parent at Monocacy Valley Montessori Charter School in Frederick, MD to ask you for your support of SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray.

As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why this bill is essential to pass. Maryland public charter schools are an integral part of the public school portfolio in Maryland, serving more than 24,000 students statewide. The communities with public charter schools, the teachers and staff that work there, the districts that include them, and the students that attend them would all benefit directly from the much needed funding SB0646 would supply.

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Charter school students are public school students and they deserve to be educated in safe, welcoming, adequate school buildings just like their traditional public school peers. Just because a family decides to send their children to a public charter school and stay in the public school system, why do they have to attend, on average, an older, more in need of repair, discarded building? Why do charter school teachers have to teach in buildings that do not have adequate space, amenities, or supports? Why do charter school operators have to pull funding out of their Blueprint dollars to pay for their buildings, while traditional schools & LEAs pull from capital funding and general funds? Bottom line, it isn't equitable. Through your support, we can work to close inequities public charter school students, families, and teachers experience in their school buildings every day.

This year we celebrate 20 years of the charter school law in Maryland. It is about time we get to work funding public charter school facilities. We look forward to the hearing on March 7th and your support

of SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. Please know that it is not only myself, but the larger charter school community across the state of more than 24,000 families, 50 schools in seven districts standing behind you.

Thank you,

Ashley Pilahome

ashpilahome@gmail.com

**Letter in favor SB0646 School Construction - Publi**

Uploaded by: Carrie Jean Rathmell

Position: FAV

March 6, 2023

**RE: SB0646 School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment**

Dear Senator,

I am Carrie Jean Rathmell of Frederick County, Maryland. I am writing to you as a parent of a 4th grade student at Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School, a school with a total of 315 students. I ask for your support of SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray.

As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why I am in favor of this bill.

Frederick County's two public Montessori charter schools are currently operated in buildings leased from private landlords. These leased facility spaces provide inadequate classroom size, no gymnasium, no kitchen, no cafeteria, and no outdoor green space. Facilities spending (including rent, maintenance, and utilities) for these spaces accounts for 18% of the annual budget for Carroll Creek Montessori and 15% of the annual budget for Monocacy Valley Montessori. Both Frederick County Montessori public charter schools are under contract to purchase buildings to provide better school facilities. However, we are learning during our due diligence work that the overall cost of transforming these office buildings into school buildings owned by our charter operator may prove to be out of reach of our current budget.

LEAs are able to utilize capital funding and general funds from other sources, not available to public charter schools, to support their schools' facilities, operations, & maintenance expenses. Because of the budget constraints of paying for facilities expenses from the charter schools' general operating budgets, Carroll Creek Montessori and Monocacy Valley Montessori have not yet secured sustainable, long-term facility solutions for our schools despite a decade of dedicated work. Furthermore, every dollar from the general operating budget that is spent on facilities is money that is not available for initiatives that more directly impact student learning.

[SB0646](#) seeks to establish a fund managed by the IAC that allows public charter schools to apply for up to \$2000 per pupil annually for eligible facilities-related expenses. This funding does not impact the Blueprint formula or take funding away from any other public school students, as the funding would come from the State's General Fund. Instead, [SB0646](#) will allow more Blueprint dollars to be spent IN the classroom on learning instead of ON the school's facility. It also sets strong parameters around spending accountability and transparency while ensuring there is standard bond bill language on repayment if a school should close or sell a privately-owned building.

We look forward to the hearing on March 7th and your support of [SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#). Please know that it is not only myself, but the larger charter school community across the state of more than 24,000 families, 50 schools in seven districts standing behind you.

Thank you,  
Carrie Jean Rathmell  
859 Waterford Dr  
Frederick, MD 21702

# **SB0646-testimony-chadhawkins.pdf**

Uploaded by: Chad Hawkins

Position: FAV

To the members of the Senate Budget & Tax Committee,

I am Chad Hawkins and I am writing to you today, **as a parent of two young girls, my daughters, Claire and Jane, who are 6 and 4 years old respectively**, who attend Monocacy Valley Montessori PUBLIC Charter School to ask you for your support of SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray.

As members of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why I feel so strongly that this Bill needs to pass. Maryland public charter schools are an integral part of the public school portfolio in Maryland, serving more than 24,000 students statewide. The communities with public charter schools, the teachers and staff that work there, the districts that include them, and the students that attend them would all benefit directly from the much needed funding SB0646 would supply.

Charter school students are public school students, and they deserve to be educated in safe, welcoming, adequate school buildings just like their traditional public school peers. Just because a family decides to send their children to a public charter school and stay in the public school system, **why do they have to attend, on average, an older, more in need of repair, discarded building? Why do charter school teachers have to teach in buildings that do not have adequate space, amenities, or supports? Why do charter school operators have to pull funding out of their Blueprint dollars to pay for their buildings, while traditional schools & LEAs pull from capital funding and general funds? Bottom line, it isn't equitable.** Through your support, we can work to close inequities public charter school students, families, and teachers experience in their school buildings every day.

**As a parent who regularly volunteers time within the school building, I have seen firsthand the struggle schools like ours are in to keep the facilities in working order to keep our students safe and healthy. At our school, which is a Frederick County PUBLIC school, we receive no funding or reimbursement for landscaping or other building or grounds care. Parent volunteers use their own time to come spread mulch in the outdoor play area, pull weeds, even maintain paint on parking spots in the parking lot, all tasks parents at other County public schools would never consider needing to do, as their schools are kept tidy, healthy, clean and safe by means of County landscaping crews and contracts, as well as County-employed janitorial and maintenance staff. If SB0646 were to pass, our amazing and willing staff and administrators would be able to maximize their current PPA supplied by the County to ensure the learning materials and resources within the classroom, with which the students learn and grow daily, are maintained and updated to the benefit of the students. It would also mean these PUBLIC schools like ours would be able to have safe, clean, updated facilities that foster feelings of comfort and safety for their students, instead of distracting students with aging plumbing issues, critter infestations, classrooms being far too hot or far too cold due to aging HVAC systems. This means school operators must take funding away from learning to address facilities emergencies, to the detriment of the students. Passing SB0646 would resolve these issues.**

This year we celebrate 20 years of the charter school law in Maryland. It is about time we get to work funding public charter school facilities. We look forward to the hearing on March 7th and your support of SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. Please know that it is not only myself, but the larger charter school community across the state of more than 24,000 families, 50 schools in seven districts standing behind you.

Thank you,  
Chad Hawkins, Parent of Claire and Jane at a MD **PUBLIC** Charter School

**SB0646 - school building support.pdf**

Uploaded by: Clement VASSEUR

Position: FAV

Dear Senator,

I am writing to express my strong support for SB0646 School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment, sponsored by Senator McCray. As a parent at Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School in Frederick County, Maryland, I urge you to support this bill and help ensure that our charter schools have access to adequate and affordable facilities.

Carroll Creek Montessori is an excellent public charter school that provides a unique and valuable alternative to traditional public schools. The Montessori approach focuses on each child's individual needs, providing a more personalized and engaging education that fosters creativity, critical thinking, and a love of learning. All three FCPS public charter schools, including Carroll Creek Montessori, have attained a 5-star rating on the 2019 Maryland Report Card, in company with only 9 (of 37) other FCPS elementary schools.

However, like many charter schools, Carroll Creek Montessori has struggled with inadequate and unaffordable facilities. The current school buildings offer inadequate classroom size, no gymnasium, no kitchen, no cafeteria, and no outdoor green space. In addition, a significant portion of the school's budget goes to private landlords instead of initiatives that directly support student learning. This is simply unacceptable, and it's time for our state to take action.

SB0646 seeks to establish a fund managed by the IAC that allows public charter schools to apply for up to \$2000 per pupil annually for eligible facilities-related expenses. This funding would come from the State's General Fund, and it would not impact the Blueprint formula or take funding away from any other public school students. Instead, this bill would allow more Blueprint dollars to be spent in the classroom on learning instead of on the school's facility. It also sets strong parameters around spending accountability and transparency while ensuring there is standard bond bill language on repayment if a school should close or sell a privately-owned building.

I urge you to support this bill, not only for the benefit of my children but for the benefit of all Maryland students. We need to ensure that all children have access to a quality education, regardless of their background or socioeconomic status. By supporting SB0646, you will be helping to level the playing field for charter schools and provide students with the resources they need to succeed.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to your support of SB0646.

Sincerely,

Clement Vasseur  
504 Gum Spring Rd,  
Brunswick, MD, 21716



# **SB0646 Written Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Crystal Edgley

Position: FAV

My name is Crystal Edgley and I am writing to you today as a parent of three students at Monocacy Valley Montessori Public Charter School in Frederick, Maryland to ask you for your support of SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray.

Monocacy Valley Montessori Public Charter School was the first charter school in Maryland and will be celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, the same amount of years that we've had the Charter School Law in Maryland. Our family has been a part of the MVMPCS community for nine years. MVMPCS serves students from Pre-K 3 year olds through 8th grade, and will be adding a high school class next year. We are very proud of our school; of the students, our wonderful staff, administrators and the families who devote so much of their time to making the school a success. The one thing about our school that has been troubling is the facility itself, and the lack of funds to maintain it. We have learned to handle it with courtesy and grace which are important pillars of a montessori education. We've come to love certain quirks about our very old building and have worked hard to create a welcoming environment, but all of the courtesy and grace in the world cannot fix the fact that it is falling apart and we don't have the funds to fix it.

We lease our building and it is being sold. The solution, after several grueling years of searching, is to move to a new building, and to try and convert it from a medical office building into a school. This cause, at times, has seemed daunting and impossible because of our lack of funds for the purpose. It took years to have an offer accepted on a building and to finally move into the contract phase. It's been scary to not be certain that we'll have a school to come back to each school year. To add to the frustration, when issues arise with our building as they frequently do, the funds get taken from our blueprint dollars leaving less money available to provide for better education in the classroom. We've been at the mercy of a landlord for several years, so when the rent is raised we have to make sacrifices elsewhere. One of those sacrifices was to cut classes, causing a higher number of pupils in the existing classes. We've had to close school early some days or cancel school altogether because of plumbing or heating/cooling issues. We have classrooms that are extremely difficult to heat/cool due to the age of our building, leading to undesirable learning conditions. Our play area is a parking lot, the same parking lot that staff and visitors park in. We have a small mulch yard for younger children, but no play structures and no green space. These facility funding issues are not unique to our school. There are three charter schools in Frederick, Maryland and they all face these types of problems.

In our Montessori classrooms we use a peace rose to help facilitate communication and problem resolution. Today I'm holding the figurative peace rose and asking you to please support the passing of SB0646. Our charter schools add so much to our communities. We are an equal opportunity school and serve a beautifully diverse population of students. As part of the public school system our students deserve to have the same quality of facilities and funding as their traditional public school peers. Our students should be able to come to school focused on learning in safe and adequate buildings. I know that this possible \$2000 per pupil allotment will benefit not just the students but also our teachers and administrators who do not currently

have equitable teaching conditions to their professional peers. This funding does not impact the Blueprint formula or take funding away from any other public school students, as the funding would come from the State's General Fund. The passing of SB0646 will not only benefit my three students, but also the 24,000 charter school students statewide and many more generations of students to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Crystal Edgley

# **Letter to Senator McCray.pdf**

Uploaded by: Cynthia Jacobs

Position: FAV



March 6, 2023

Senator Cory McCray  
Maryland State Senator  
James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re: SB0646 – Facilities Funding for Public Charter Schools**

Dear Senator McCray:

I hope this letter finds you healthy and safe. My name is Cynthia Jacobs, and I am the School/Community Advocate and Program Coordinator for Baltimore Teacher Network (BTN). We are a nonprofit organization and the Operator of a charter school (ConneXions: A Community Based Arts School) that serves over 500 students and 70 teachers. I am writing in favor of the SB0646 legislation for more funding in our schools. We are in need of additional funding for the following internal and external repairs necessary for our students and teachers to cohabitate in a safe, high – functioning learning environment. The following repairs are needed in our school:

- External system updates
- Update all bathrooms in the school
- Black top pathing of potholes
- HVAC system
- New flooring throughout the school
- Painting and building structure updates to the auditorium (walls, doors, floors, chairs)

Thank you in advance for your support of this bill.

Cynthia L. Jacobs  
School/Community Advocate & Program Coordinator  
Baltimore Teacher Network  
940 Madison Avenue, L1  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
(P) 410-469-9902

**SB0646-testimony-hawkins.pdf**

Uploaded by: Danielle Hawkins

Position: FAV

To the members of the Senate Budget & Tax Committee,

I am Danielle Hawkins and I am writing to you today, **as a parent of two young girls, my daughters, Claire and Jane, who are 6 and 4 years old respectively**, who attend Monocacy Valley Montessori PUBLIC Charter School to ask you for your support of SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray.

As members of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why I feel so strongly that this Bill needs to pass. Maryland public charter schools are an integral part of the public school portfolio in Maryland, serving more than 24,000 students statewide. The communities with public charter schools, the teachers and staff that work there, the districts that include them, and the students that attend them would all benefit directly from the much needed funding SB0646 would supply.

Charter school students are public school students, and they deserve to be educated in safe, welcoming, adequate school buildings just like their traditional public school peers. Just because a family decides to send their children to a public charter school and stay in the public school system, **why do they have to attend, on average, an older, more in need of repair, discarded building? Why do charter school teachers have to teach in buildings that do not have adequate space, amenities, or supports? Why do charter school operators have to pull funding out of their Blueprint dollars to pay for their buildings, while traditional schools & LEAs pull from capital funding and general funds? Bottom line, it isn't equitable.** Through your support, we can work to close inequities public charter school students, families, and teachers experience in their school buildings every day.

**As a parent who regularly volunteers time within the school building, I have seen firsthand the struggle schools like ours are in to keep the facilities in working order to keep our students safe and healthy. At our school, which is a Frederick County PUBLIC school, we receive no funding or reimbursement for landscaping or other building or grounds care. Parent volunteers use their own time to come spread mulch in the outdoor play area, pull weeds, even maintain paint on parking spots in the parking lot, all tasks parents at other County public schools would never consider needing to do, as their schools are kept tidy, healthy, clean and safe by means of County landscaping crews and contracts, as well as County-employed janitorial and maintenance staff. If SB0646 were to pass, our amazing and willing staff and administrators would be able to maximize their current PPA supplied by the County to ensure the learning materials and resources within the classroom, with which the students learn and grow daily, are maintained and updated to the benefit of the students. It would also mean these PUBLIC schools like ours would be able to have safe, clean, updated facilities that foster feelings of comfort and safety for their students, instead of distracting students with aging plumbing issues, critter infestations, classrooms being far too hot or far too cold due to aging HVAC systems. This means school operators must take funding away from learning to address facilities emergencies, to the detriment of the students. Passing SB0646 would resolve these issues.**

This year we celebrate 20 years of the charter school law in Maryland. It is about time we get to work funding public charter school facilities. We look forward to the hearing on March 7th and your support of SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. Please know that it is not only myself, but the larger charter school community across the state of more than 24,000 families, 50 schools in seven districts standing behind you.

Thank you,  
Danielle Hawkins, Parent of Claire and Jane at a MD **PUBLIC** Charter School

# **David N. Miller Testimony in Favor on SB 0646 dnm**

Uploaded by: DAVID MILLER

Position: FAV

March 7, 2023

David N. Miller  
Regional Facilities Director  
Imagine Schools Mid-Atlantic Region  
703 Field Street, Baltimore, MD 21211

**TESTIMONY ON SB0646- POSITION: FAVORABLE**  
**School Construction – Public Charter School Facility Fund -- Establishment**

Good Afternoon Chair Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapepe, and members of the Budget and Taxation Committee. My name is David Miller, and I serve as the Regional Facilities Director for Imagine Schools Mid-Atlantic Region. Imagine Schools operates four public charter schools in Prince George's County that serve over 1,600 scholars in Kindergarten through 8th Grades; as Regional Facilities Director I manage four campuses comprising 177,500 square feet across nine buildings. I am submitting this testimony in support of Senate Bill 646, providing the Establishment of a Charter School Facility Fund.

Charter schools play a crucial role in providing quality education options for students in Maryland. Our schools have unique needs and face significant challenges when it comes to securing and maintaining suitable facilities. Each day, my team and I are forced to make decisions based on a limited amount of funds to support the management and maintenance of our school facilities. Our school buildings range in age from 69 to 11 years old.

We know that each decision, from fixing a leaky roof to re-painting a drab classroom, impacts funds that could be spent on learning: curriculum, books for classroom libraries, technology acquisition. And some issues aren't decisions: HVAC unit repairs are urgent; life safety issues have to be addressed immediately. Across the country, facilities issues, inadequate facilities, and their impact on charter schools' budgets are one of the primary causes for charter school closings.

That's why there is a critical need for a dedicated charter schools facility fund in Maryland. This fund would prevent public charter schools from having to dip into the per-pupil allotment funding stream from their authorizers to address a majority of facilities expenses. This is a simple question of equity: currently, why does a charter school student in Maryland not have access to the same level of facilities funding support as their friend at the neighboring traditional public school? When that scholar's parents enroll them in a charter school, are they not entitled to the same full faith and credit of the State of Maryland that their peers have access to in facilities that are renovated or newly constructed?

Overall, a dedicated charter schools facility fund in Maryland is essential to ensure that charter schools have equal access to resources and support as traditional public schools.

By investing in our facilities, we can improve the educational experience and outcomes of our scholars, promote greater equity in education, and create a brighter future for Maryland's children. I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB0646.

# **SB 646 School Construction – Public Charter School**

Uploaded by: Destiny Bell

Position: FAV

**CORY V. McCRAY**  
*Legislative District 45*  
Baltimore City

DEPUTY MAJORITY WHIP

Budget and Taxation Committee

*Subcommittees*

Chair, Health and Human Services

Vice Chair, Capital Budget

Executive Nominations Committee

Legislative Policy Committee

Joint Committee on Gaming Oversight



James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 221  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3165 · 301-858-3165  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3165  
Cory.McCray@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

## **Vote Yes on Senate Bill 646**

**Bill Title: School Construction – Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment**

**Hearing Date: March 7, 2023, Budget and Taxation Committee**

**Greetings Chair, Vice Chair, and all members of the Committee**

It is with great honor that I present to you Senate Bill 646. This bill will go into effect on July 1, 2023. Senate Bill 646 will establish the Public Charter School Facility fund as a non-lapsing fund. Designated money from the state budget will be transferred to this cause. SB646 affirms that any money earned from the fund and other money from other sources accepted for the benefit of the fund is solely used for the benefit of public charter school facilities. We strive to enhance the experience of our students and staff. The goal is to provide secure funding to prevent fraud and improve the learning environment.

Senate Bill 646 allows for the amount of funding provided to a public charter school for each fiscal year shall be equal to the facility expenses.

The governor shall include this in the annual budget bill an appropriation that is equal to the total aggregate enrollment in public charter schools in the state in the prior fiscal year multiplied by \$2,000.

We all know the importance of education. It is imperative that we strive to provide quality learning spaces for our children. The future is in our hands, and positive changes should be made. For these reasons, I respectfully ask for your support in approving Senate Bill 646.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Cory V. McCray', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Cory V. McCray  
State Senator

**SB0646-2.pdf**

Uploaded by: Glenda Washington

Position: FAV

**Glenda Washington**  
**4311 Longleaf Court**  
**Bowie, MD 20716**

March 6, 2023

Greetings,

**My name is Glenda Washington. I am a resident of Maryland and a retired educator. I am testifying today in favor of SB0646 and am urging you to vote in favor of the bill.**

As a lifelong educator and a resident of Maryland, I have firsthand knowledge of the educational system and the urgent need for additional choices for our families. While Maryland still lags behind many other states on its support for charter schools, charter schools are a welcoming opportunity for Maryland's families. Charter schools in Maryland currently provide a free option for over 24,000 children. Charter schools provide flexibility for many educators. Charter schools allow families to remain in their LEA thereby keeping the per student funding within the district versus sending their scholars to private schools resulting in loss of funding for their school district.

With that being said, charter schools in Maryland don't receive capital funding and so much of the monies that should be spent directly on students' education must needfully go towards facilities and the associated costs. Charter school operators are solely responsible for facilities and their associated costs. SB0646 would provide the opportunity for public charter school students, teachers, and families to have the same facility experience as their other public school peers who are attending 21st Century Schools, updated buildings, and state of the art learning facilities. Families who opt for charter schools tend to choose a program versus a place. However, the lack of funding for charter school facilities is incredibly unfair to those children.

The passage of SB0646 charter schools, like other public schools, can get the necessary funding to ensure their students are not only attending schools that serve students' academic interests but also schools that are structurally and aesthetically up to par and suitable for 21st Century students. The monies charter schools will save as a result of SB0646 can then be used to directly impact the in-class learning charter school students experience.

If SB0646 passes, each's allocation/reimbursement per student would be no more than \$2000. This is not a lot of money. The funds are available and will not impact the funds already given to regular public schools. The funds, through the passage of SB0646, would come from the State's General Fund and not the LEA capital funding or per pupil funding allocation for LEAs. If every charter school in Maryland decided to max out their reimbursement under SB0646, this miniscule amount would be approximately \$48 million annually.

In closing, the passage of SB0646 will only help students and will harm no one. I am in favor of SB0646 and I urge you to vote in favor of SB0646. Thank you for the opportunity to have my voice heard.

Sincerely,  
Glenda Washington, Ed.D.

# **SB0646.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jagan Bobbala

Position: FAV

March 7, 2023

RE: SB0646 School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment

Dear Senator,

I am Jagan Bobbala of Frederick County, Maryland, and I am writing to you today, as a parent/guardian at Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School, to ask you for your support of SB0646 School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment sponsored by Senator McCray.

As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why it is essential that this bill passes.

FCPS Public Charter Schools are excellent. All three charters attained a 5-star rating on the 2019 Maryland Report Card, in company with only 9 (of 37) other FCPS elementary schools. Yet the future of Frederick County's Public Charter Schools is in jeopardy because of a lack of adequate and affordable facilities. Carroll Creek Montessori, a public charter school in Frederick County that educates 318 students, has been actively searching for an affordable, safe facility solution for more than a decade.

Frederick's public Montessori charter school buildings offer inadequate classroom size, no gymnasium, no kitchen, no cafeteria, and no outdoor green space. In addition, fully 18% of the annual budget for Carroll Creek Montessori and 15% of the annual budget for Monocacy Valley Montessori goes to private landlords instead of to initiatives that directly support student learning, which is where the money would go in a traditional public school. Both Montessori schools have accepted offers on buildings, but we are learning during our due diligence work that the cost of renovations may prevent or limit our ability to build out school buildings. We are still without a quality, long-term solution because of budget constraints.

LEAs are able to utilize capital funding and general funds from other sources, not available to public charter schools, to support their facilities, operations, & maintenance. SB0646 seeks to establish a fund managed by the IAC that allows public charter schools to apply for up to \$2000 per pupil annually for eligible facilities-related expenses. This funding does not impact the Blueprint formula or take funding away from any other public school students, as the funding would come from the State's General Fund. Instead, SB0646 will allow more Blueprint dollars to be spent IN the classroom on learning instead of ON the school's facility. It also sets strong parameters around spending accountability and transparency while ensuring there is standard bond bill language on repayment if a school should close or sell a privately-owned building.

We look forward to the hearing on March 7th and your support of SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. Please know that it is not only myself, but the larger charter school community across the state of more than 24,000 families, 50 schools in seven districts standing behind you.

Thank you,

Jagan Bobbala

6110 Fallfish Ct,

New Market,MD-21774

**Please pass SB0646 Senator Benson.pdf**

Uploaded by: James Gardiner

Position: FAV

Dear Senator Joanne C. Benson:

I am James B. Gardiner and I am writing to you today, as a/the CEO at Owner Rep Consulting to ask you for your support of SB0646 School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment sponsored by Senator McCray.

As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why this bill is essentially to pass. Maryland public charter schools are an integral part of the public school portfolio in Maryland, serving more than 24,000 students statewide. The communities with public charter schools, the teachers and staff that work there, the districts that include them, and the students that attend them would all benefit directly from the much needed funding SB0646 would supply.

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Charter school students are public school students and they deserve to be educated in safe, welcoming, adequate school buildings just like their traditional public school peers. Just because a family decides to send their children to a public charter school and stay in the public school system, why do they have to attend, on average, an older, more in need of repair, discarded building? Why do charter school teachers have to teach in buildings that do not have adequate space, amenities, or supports? Why do charter school operators have to pull funding out of their Blueprint dollars to pay for their buildings, while traditional schools & LEAs pull from capital funding and general funds? Bottom line, it isn't equitable. Through your support, we can work to close inequities public charter school students, families, and teachers experience in their school buildings every day.

This year we celebrate 20 years of the charter school law in Maryland. It is about time we get to work funding public charter school facilities. We look forward to the hearing on March 7th and your support of SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. Please know that it is not only myself, but the larger charter school community across the state of more than 24,000 families, 50 schools in seven districts standing behind you. Thanks.

Sincerely,



James B. Gardiner

**Please pass SB0646 Senator Jackson.pdf**

Uploaded by: James Gardiner

Position: FAV

Dear Senator Michael A. Jackson:

I am James B. Gardiner and I am writing to you today, as a/the CEO at Owner Rep Consulting to ask you for your support of SB0646 School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment sponsored by Senator McCray.

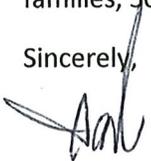
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Sincerely,



James B. Gardiner

**Please pass SB0646 Senator Rosapepe.pdf**

Uploaded by: James Gardiner

Position: FAV

Dear Senator James Rosapepe:

I am James B. Gardiner and I am writing to you today, as a/the CEO at Owner Rep Consulting to ask you for your support of SB0646 School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment sponsored by Senator McCray.

As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why this bill is essentially to pass. Maryland public charter schools are an integral part of the public school portfolio in Maryland, serving more than 24,000 students statewide. The communities with public charter schools, the teachers and staff that work there, the districts that include them, and the students that attend them would all benefit directly from the much needed funding SB0646 would supply.

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Sincerely,



James B. Gardiner

**SB0646.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jennifer Kuhn

Position: FAV

Dear Senator,

I am Jennifer Kuhn and I am writing to you today, as the Community Outreach Chair, Hiring Chair, previous Governing Council Chair, previous Board of Trustees Secretary, and proud parent at Monocacy Valley Montessori Public Charter School (Frederick, MD), to ask you for your support of SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray.

As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why this bill is essential to pass. Maryland public charter schools are an integral part of the public school portfolio in Maryland, serving more than 24,000 students statewide. The communities with public charter schools, the teachers and staff that work there, the districts that include them, and the students that attend them would all benefit directly from the much needed funding SB0646 would supply.

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Thank you,

Jennifer Kuhn

Parent & Volunteer at Monocacy Valley Montessori Public Charter School  
(Frederick, MD)

# **SB0646 School Construction - SIGNED.pdf**

Uploaded by: John Edwards

Position: FAV

March 6, 2023

**RE: SB0646 School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment**

Dear Senator,

I am John Edwards, a parent of a student at Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School in Frederick County, Maryland. I am writing to you today to ask you for your support of SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray.

As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why it is essential that this bill passes.

FCPS Public Charter Schools are excellent. All three charters attained a 5-star rating on the 2019 Maryland Report Card, in company with only 9 (of 37) other FCPS elementary schools. Yet the future of Frederick County's Public Charter Schools is in jeopardy because of a lack of adequate and affordable facilities. Carroll Creek Montessori, a public charter school in Frederick County that educates 318 students, has been actively searching for an affordable, safe facility solution for more than a decade. There is consistent interest in our school with an extensive waiting list each year. We currently have 1938 applicants with a week remaining for application to our lottery for approximately 35 spots.

Frederick's public Montessori charter school buildings offer inadequate classroom size, no gymnasium, no kitchen, no cafeteria, and no outdoor green space. In addition, fully 18% of the annual budget for Carroll Creek Montessori and 15% of the annual budget for Monocacy Valley Montessori goes to private landlords instead of to initiatives that directly support student learning, which is where the money would go in a traditional public school. Both Montessori schools have accepted offers on buildings, but we are learning during our due diligence work that budgetary limitations may prevent or limit our ability to renovate either of the buildings. We are still without a quality, long-term solution because of budget constraints.

LEAs are able to utilize capital funding and general funds from other sources, not available to public charter schools, to support their facilities, operations, & maintenance. SB0646 seeks to establish a fund managed by the IAC that allows public charter schools to apply for up to \$2000 per pupil annually for eligible facilities-related expenses. This funding does not impact the Blueprint formula or take funding away from any other public school students, as the funding would come from the State's General Fund. Instead, SB0646 will allow more Blueprint dollars to be spent IN the classroom on learning instead of ON the school's facility. It also sets strong parameters around spending accountability and transparency while ensuring there is standard bond bill language on repayment if a school should close or sell a privately-owned building.

We look forward to the hearing on March 7th and your support of SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. Please know that it is not only myself, but the larger charter school community across the state of more than 24,000 families, 50 schools in seven districts standing behind you.

Thank you,

John Edwards  
7422 Skyline Drive  
Frederick, MD 21702

# **CCM Letter 1.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jordan Brandon

Position: FAV

March 7, 2023

**RE: SB0646 School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment**

Dear Senator,

I am Jordan Brandon, parent of 3 children attending Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School in Frederick County, Maryland. I am writing to you today to ask you for your support of SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray.

As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why it is essential that this bill passes.

FCPS Public Charter Schools are excellent. All three charters attained a 5-star rating on the 2019 Maryland Report Card, in company with only 9 (of 37) other FCPS elementary schools. Yet the future of Frederick County's Public Charter Schools is in jeopardy because of a lack of adequate and affordable facilities. Carroll Creek Montessori, a public charter school in Frederick County that educates 318 students, has been actively searching for an affordable, safe facility solution for more than a decade.

Frederick's public Montessori charter school buildings offer inadequate classroom size, no gymnasium, no kitchen, no cafeteria, and no outdoor green space. In addition, fully 18% of the annual budget for Carroll Creek Montessori and 15% of the annual budget for Monocacy Valley Montessori goes to private landlords instead of to initiatives that directly support student learning, which is where the money would go in a traditional public school. Both Montessori schools have accepted offers on buildings, but we are learning during our due diligence work that the cost of renovations may prevent or limit our ability to build out school buildings. We are still without a quality, long-term solution because of budget constraints.

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Thank you,

Jordan Brandon

1305 Pear Tree Ct.  
Frederick, MD 21703

**letter 3-6-23.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kelly Hartzell

Position: FAV

March 6, 2023

**RE: SB0646 School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment**

Dear Senator,

Hello, my name is Kelly Hartzell and I am the parent of two students at Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School in Frederick County, Maryland. I am writing to you today to ask you for your support of SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray.

As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why it is essential that this bill passes.

FCPS Public Charter Schools are excellent. All three charters attained a 5-star rating on the 2019 Maryland Report Card, in company with only 9 (of 37) other FCPS elementary schools. Yet the future of Frederick County's Public Charter Schools is in jeopardy because of a lack of adequate and affordable facilities. Carroll Creek Montessori, a public charter school in Frederick County that educates 318 students, has been actively searching for an affordable, safe facility solution for more than a decade. There is consistent interest in Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School with an extensive waiting list each year. After being denied a seat at the school for four years in a row due to availability my daughter was finally awarded a seat last year. My son was not and I had both children in different schooling environments. It wasn't until the following year that he was awarded a spot as well.

Frederick's public Montessori charter school buildings offer inadequate classroom size, no gymnasium, no kitchen, no cafeteria, and no outdoor green space. My six year old came home one day and asked if she could donate her money to the school so she could "help to build a playground." In addition, fully 18% of the annual budget for Carroll Creek Montessori and 15% of the annual budget for Monocacy Valley Montessori goes to private landlords instead of to initiatives that directly support student learning, which is where the money would go in a traditional public school. Both Montessori schools have accepted offers on buildings, but are learning during our due diligence work that budgetary limitations may prevent or limit our ability to renovate either of the buildings. We are still without a quality, long-term solution because of budget constraints.

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Thank you,  
Kelly Hartzell  
Parent of a 1st grader and 4th grader at CCM  
10803 Ridgewood Court  
New Market, MD 21774

**In favor of SB0646\_Kristen Cortiglia.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kristen Cortiglia

Position: FAV

March 7, 2023

**RE: In favor of SB0646 School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment**

Dear Senator,

I am Kristen Cortiglia of Frederick County, Maryland, and I am writing to you today, as a parent/guardian at Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School, to ask you for your support of SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray.

As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why it is essential that this bill passes.

FCPS Public Charter Schools are excellent. All three charters attained a 5-star rating on the 2019 Maryland Report Card, in company with only 9 (of 37) other FCPS elementary schools. Yet the future of Frederick County's Public Charter Schools is in jeopardy because of a lack of adequate and affordable facilities. Carroll Creek Montessori, a public charter school in Frederick County that educates 318 students, has been actively searching for an affordable, safe facility solution for more than a decade.

Frederick's public Montessori charter school buildings offer inadequate classroom size, no gymnasium, no kitchen, no cafeteria, and no outdoor green space. In addition, fully 18% of the annual budget for Carroll Creek Montessori and 15% of the annual budget for Monocacy Valley Montessori goes to private landlords instead of to initiatives that directly support student learning, which is where the money would go in a traditional public school. Both Montessori schools have accepted offers on buildings, but we are learning during our due diligence work that the cost of renovations may prevent or limit our ability to build out school buildings. We are still without a quality, long-term solution because of budget constraints.

LEAs are able to utilize capital funding and general funds from other sources, not available to public charter schools, to support their facilities, operations, & maintenance. SB0646 seeks to establish a fund managed by the IAC that allows public charter schools to apply for up to \$2000 per pupil annually for eligible facilities-related expenses. This funding does not impact the Blueprint formula or take funding away from any other public school students, as the funding would come from the State's General Fund. Instead, SB0646 will allow more Blueprint dollars to be spent IN the classroom on learning instead of ON the school's facility. It also sets strong parameters around spending accountability and transparency while ensuring there is standard bond bill language on repayment if a school should close or sell a privately-owned building.

We look forward to the hearing on March 7th and your support of SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. Please know that it is not only myself, but the larger charter school community across the state of more than 24,000 families, 50 schools in seven districts standing behind you.

Thank you,  
Kristen Cortiglia  
5627 Jordan Blvd.  
New Market, MD 21774

**SB0646.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kyla Nelson

Position: FAV



Dear Senator,

I am Kyla Nelson and I am writing to you today, as a teacher at Monocacy Valley Montessori Public Charter School, to ask you for your support of SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray.

As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why this bill is essentially to pass. Maryland public charter schools are an integral part of the public school portfolio in Maryland, serving more than 24,000 students statewide. The communities with public charter schools, the teachers and staff that work there, the districts that include them, and the students that attend them would all benefit directly from the much needed funding SB0646 would supply.

LEAs are able to utilize capital funding and general funds from other sources, not available to public charter schools, to support their facilities, operations, & maintenance. SB0646 seeks to establish a fund managed by the IAC that allows public charter schools to apply for up to \$2000 per pupil annually for eligible facilities-related expenses. This funding does not impact the Blueprint formula or take funding away from any other public school students, as the funding would come from the State's General Fund. Instead, SB0646 will allow more Blueprint dollars to be spent IN the classroom on learning instead of ON the school's facility. It also sets strong parameters around spending accountability and transparency while ensuring there is standard bond bill language on repayment if a school should close or sell a privately-owned building.

Charter school students are public school students and they deserve to be educated in safe, welcoming, adequate school buildings just like their traditional public school peers. Just because a family decides to send their children to a public charter school and stay in the public school system, why do they have to attend, on average, an older, more in need of repair, discarded building? Why do charter school teachers have to teach in buildings that do not have adequate space, amenities, or supports? Why do charter school operators have to pull funding out of their Blueprint dollars to pay for their buildings, while traditional schools & LEAs pull from capital funding and general funds? Bottom line, it isn't equitable. Through your support, we can work to close inequities public charter school students, families, and teachers experience in their school buildings every day.

From personal experience, I can say that my students' educational experience has suffered due to poor facility conditions. My classroom has reached 84 degrees at times and my students have needed to take breaks in order to prevent passing out from the heat. My school had to close early on multiple occasions and even close for two school days last year due to plumbing issues that needed to be fixed. My school building is over a hundred years old and it is falling apart. We have a mice issue and ongoing heating and air conditioning issues. As I am writing this letter, I am sitting in my classroom with floor fans blowing to try and temper the heat while my students work. Charter schools are wonderful educational opportunities, and yet, those opportunities cannot be realized with a facility that is falling apart.

This year we celebrate 20 years of the charter school law in Maryland. It is about time we get to work funding public charter school facilities. We look forward to the hearing on March 7th and your support of SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. Please know that it is not only myself, but the larger charter school community across the state of more than 24,000 families, 50 schools in seven districts standing behind you.

Thank you,  
Kyla Nelson

# Untitled document.pdf

Uploaded by: Laura Hohn

Position: FAV

Dear Senator McCray,

My name is Laura Hohn and I am an Instructional Assistant at Monocacy Valley Public Charter School. Our school was the first charter school in Maryland opening in the fall of 2002! I really appreciate your sponsorship of SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#). This bill is so important for our public charter school system which serves more than 24,000 students in Maryland. Currently, as a charter school we do not receive any facilities funding. We have to use some of our annual per pupil allotment (PPA) and a lot of fundraising to be able to pay rent in a very old building to house the school. Our public charter school, the teachers and staff, the students and community as a whole would benefit greatly to receive funding from SB0646.

Thank you so much for your support!!

Laura L. Hohn  
MVMPCS

# **SB0646 School Construction .pdf**

Uploaded by: Marilyn Horan

Position: FAV

March 6, 2023

**RE: SB0646 School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment**

Dear Senator,

I am Marilyn Horan, the principal of Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School in Frederick County, Maryland. I am writing to you today to ask you for your support of SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray.

As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why it is essential that this bill passes.

FCPS Public Charter Schools are excellent. All three charters attained a 5-star rating on the 2019 Maryland Report Card, in company with only 9 (of 37) other FCPS elementary schools. Yet the future of Frederick County's Public Charter Schools is in jeopardy because of a lack of adequate and affordable facilities. Carroll Creek Montessori, a public charter school in Frederick County that educates 318 students, has been actively searching for an affordable, safe facility solution for more than a decade. There is consistent interest in our school with an extensive waiting list each year. We currently have 1938 applicants with a week remaining for application to our lottery for approximately 35 spots.

Frederick's public Montessori charter school buildings offer inadequate classroom size, no gymnasium, no kitchen, no cafeteria, and no outdoor green space. In addition, fully 18% of the annual budget for Carroll Creek Montessori and 15% of the annual budget for Monocacy Valley Montessori goes to private landlords instead of to initiatives that directly support student learning, which is where the money would go in a traditional public school. Both Montessori schools have accepted offers on buildings, but we are learning during our due diligence work that budgetary limitations may prevent or limit our ability to renovate either of the buildings. We are still without a quality, long-term solution because of budget constraints.

LEAs are able to utilize capital funding and general funds from other sources, not available to public charter schools, to support their facilities, operations, & maintenance. SB0646 seeks to establish a fund managed by the IAC that allows public charter schools to apply for up to \$2000 per pupil annually for eligible facilities-related expenses. This funding does not impact the Blueprint formula or take funding away from any other public school students, as the funding would come from the State's General Fund. Instead, SB0646 will allow more Blueprint dollars to be spent IN the classroom on learning instead of ON the school's facility. It also sets strong parameters around spending accountability and transparency while ensuring there is standard bond bill language on repayment if a school should close or sell a privately-owned building.

We look forward to the hearing on March 7th and your support of SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. Please know that it is not only myself, but the larger charter school community across the state of more than 24,000 families, 50 schools in seven districts standing behind you.

Thank you,  
Marilyn Horan  
4023 Trego Rd  
Keedysville, MD 21756

# **Maldonado Urging Support for SB0646.pdf**

Uploaded by: Marisa Maldonado

Position: FAV

March 6, 2023

**RE: Urging you to support SB0646 School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment**

Dear Senator,

I am Marisa Maldonado of New Market, Frederick County, Maryland, and I am writing to you today, as a teacher at Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School as well as a parent of a child at said school, to ask you for your support of SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray.

As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why it is essential that this bill passes.

FCPS Public Charter Schools are excellent. All three charters attained a 5-star rating on the 2019 Maryland Report Card, in company with only 9 (of 37) other FCPS elementary schools. Yet the future of Frederick County's Public Charter Schools is in jeopardy because of a lack of adequate and affordable facilities. Carroll Creek Montessori, a public charter school in Frederick County that educates 318 students, has been actively searching for an affordable, safe facility solution for more than a decade.

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We look forward to the hearing on March 7th and your support of SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. **Please know that it is not only myself, but the larger charter school community across the state of more than 24,000 families, 50 schools in seven districts standing behind you. Passage of this bill will have a direct impact in how I am able to perform my job as well a critical impact on the quality of education and facilities we can provide to our students. Please use this opportunity to show your support for the very important work that we do in our public charter schools.**

Thank you,  
Marisa Maldonado  
7019 Club House Circle  
New Market, MD 21774

**SB0646 Testimony MAPCS 3\_6\_23.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: McKenzie Allen

Position: FAV



March 6, 2023

Written Testimony for SB0646

Thank you, Chairpersons and Committee Members, for allowing me the opportunity to testify in favor of SB0646. My name is McKenzie Allen and I am the executive director of the Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools (also known as MAPCS). MAPCS is a nonprofit organization of charter school operators from across the state. We represent over 24,000 students in 50 schools over seven districts.

LEAs are able to utilize capital funding and general funds from other sources, not available to public charter schools, to support their facilities, operations, & maintenance. SB0646 seeks to establish a fund managed by the IAC that allows public charter schools to apply for up to \$2000 per pupil annually for eligible facilities-related expenses. This funding does not impact the Blueprint formula or take funding away from any other public school students, as the funding would come from the State's General Fund. Instead, SB0646 will allow Blueprint dollars to be spent IN the classroom on learning instead of ON the school's facility. It also sets strong parameters around spending accountability and transparency while ensuring there is standard bond bill language on repayment if a school should close or sell a privately-owned building.

Charter school students are public school students and they deserve to be educated in safe, welcoming, adequate school buildings just like their traditional public school peers. Just because a family decides to send their children to a public charter school and stay in the public school system, why do they have to attend, on average, an older, more in need of repair, discarded building? Why do charter school teachers have to teach in buildings that do not have adequate space, amenities, or supports? Why do charter school operators have to pull funding out of their Blueprint dollars to pay for their buildings, while traditional schools & LEAs pull from capital funding and general funds? Bottom line, it isn't equitable. Through your support, we can work to close inequities public charter school students, families, and teachers experience in their school buildings every day.

This year we celebrate 20 years of the charter school law in Maryland. It is about time we get to work funding public charter school facilities. We look forward to the vote today and your support of SB0646. Please know that it is not only myself, but the larger charter school community across the state of more than 24,000 families, 50 schools in seven districts standing behind you.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to reach out. I can be reached at the information below. Please pass SB0646.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'McKenzie Allen', is positioned above the typed name.

McKenzie Allen

Executive Director, Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools

[mckenzie@mdcharters.org](mailto:mckenzie@mdcharters.org)

410.919.9678 EXT 1

[www.marylandcharters.org](http://www.marylandcharters.org)

**SB0646 Carlson Written Witness .pdf**

Uploaded by: Molly Carlson

Position: FAV

March 7, 2023

**RE: SB0646 School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund – Establishment  
Position – Favorable**

Dear Senator,

I am Molly Carlson of Frederick County, Maryland, and I am writing to you today, as a parent/guardian at Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School, to ask you for your support of SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray.

As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why it is essential that this bill passes.

**I have led our school's facility search for five years**, and have an intimate understanding of the risks to public charter schools without adequate facility funding. One of the primary reasons public charter schools fail is because of budgets and funding. Our institution has been fiscally responsible, approving budgets only when a direct, positive impact on student learning is anticipated. A few statistics on our situation should help to highlight our dilemma, which is no doubt shared by public charters across the state.

- Fully 18% of the Per Pupil Allotment (PPA) coming from our LEA goes toward facilities costs. This is money that – at a traditional school – will be spent on teaching and learning.
- While we control costs to the degree we can, increases in teacher and staff salaries occur, often without a concurrent increase in PPA.
- Our rent increases 3% annually and – in two years – this amount will become unsustainable. We will be forced to cut instructional services and staff or close our doors. As a 5-star elementary school with an excellent track record of preparing students for success in high school and beyond, this should be of great concern.
- We recognize that the best long-term solution for our institution is to purchase and renovate a facility, where mortgage costs are fixed.
- We currently have an accepted offer on a building after a five-year search. In addition to overcoming zoning laws that privilege traditional schools, we need to decide whether we can afford to purchase and renovate the building to make it a safe space for student learning, which will total approximately \$12,500,000. This is approximately \$39,000 per child; far less than a traditional school would spend in outfitting a new building, yet we may not be able to engage in the project.
- As you can see from the summary below, the requested funding would be sufficient to allow our school to contribute to thrive:

**Current facility project**

Anticipated annual facility costs: \$944,564

Budgeted annual facility costs: \$473,111

**Anticipated annual deficit: -\$470,653**

Projected annual funding from SB0646: \$540,000

LEAs are able to utilize capital funding and general funds from other sources, not available to public charter schools, to support their facilities, operations, & maintenance. SB0646 seeks to establish a fund

managed by the IAC that allows public charter schools to apply for up to \$2000 per pupil annually for eligible facilities-related expenses.

We look forward to the hearing on March 7th and your support of SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. Please don't hesitate to contact me directly for more information on our situation and details on our budgeting process.

Thank you,  
Dr. Molly Carlson  
7112 Autumn Leaf Ln  
Frederick, MD 21702  
(608) 347-3314  
[mcarlson@mmcimd.org](mailto:mcarlson@mmcimd.org)

# **Letter for Senate Budget and Tax SB0646.pdf**

Uploaded by: Omer Bhatti

Position: FAV

March 7, 2023

**RE: SB0646 School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment**

Dear Senator,

I am Omer Bhatti of Frederick County, Maryland, and I am writing to you today, as a parent at Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School, to ask you for your support of SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray.

As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why it is essential that this bill passes.

FCPS Public Charter Schools are excellent. All three charters attained a 5-star rating on the 2019 Maryland Report Card, in company with only 9 (of 37) other FCPS elementary schools. Yet the future of Frederick County's Public Charter Schools is in jeopardy because of a lack of adequate and affordable facilities. Carroll Creek Montessori, a public charter school in Frederick County that educates 318 students, has been actively searching for an affordable, safe facility solution for more than a decade.

Frederick's public Montessori charter school buildings offer inadequate classroom size, no gymnasium, no kitchen, no cafeteria, and no outdoor green space. In addition, fully 18% of the annual budget for Carroll Creek Montessori and 15% of the annual budget for Monocacy Valley Montessori goes to private landlords instead of to initiatives that directly support student learning, which is where the money would go in a traditional public school. Both Montessori schools have accepted offers on buildings, but we are learning during our due diligence work that the cost of renovations may prevent or limit our ability to build out school buildings. We are still without a quality, long-term solution because of budget constraints.

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We look forward to the hearing on March 7th and your support of SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. Please know that it is not only myself, but the larger charter school community across the state of more than 24,000 families, 50 schools in seven districts standing behind you.

Thank you,  
Omer Bhatti  
1421 Ricketts Rd, Frederick, MD 21702

# **Bldg fund ltr to gov.pdf**

Uploaded by: Rachel Fedje

Position: FAV

March 7, 2023

**RE: SB0646 School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment**

Dear Senator,

I am Rachel Fedje of Frederick County, Maryland, and I am writing to you today, as a parent/guardian at Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School, to ask you for your support of SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray.

As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why it is essential that this bill passes.

FCPS Public Charter Schools are excellent. All three charters attained a 5-star rating on the 2019 Maryland Report Card, in company with only 9 (of 37) other FCPS elementary schools. Yet the future of Frederick County's Public Charter Schools is in jeopardy because of a lack of adequate and affordable facilities. Carroll Creek Montessori, a public charter school in Frederick County that educates 318 students, has been actively searching for an affordable, safe facility solution for more than a decade.

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We look forward to the hearing on March 7th and your support of SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. Please know that it is not only myself, but the larger charter school community across the state of more than 24,000 families, 50 schools in seven districts standing behind you.

Thank you,  
Rachel Fedje  
7 E 15th St

# **Support Letter for Senate Budget and Tax SB0646.pd**

Uploaded by: Regina Chadwick

Position: FAV

Greetings!

I am Regina Chadwick and I am writing to you today as the Administrative Secretary and a 12 year parent at Monocacy Valley Montessori Public Charter School (MVMPCS), to ask for your support of SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray.

MVMPCS was the first charter school in Maryland when it opened in the fall of 2002. We have consistently provided a high-quality Montessori education to Frederick County Public School students in spite of having a limited budget due to covering facilities costs. Over the last 20 years as a charter school in Maryland we have had to operate with limited staffing and cut extra programming to ensure we can continue to provide a quality education in a building of major disrepair. .

As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why this bill is essential to pass. Maryland public charter schools are an integral part of the public school portfolio in Maryland, serving more than 24,000 students statewide. The communities with public charter schools, the teachers and staff that work there, the districts that include them, and the students that attend them would all benefit directly from the much needed funding SB0646 would supply.

LEAs are able to utilize capital funding and general funds from other sources, not available to public charter schools, to support their facilities, operations, & maintenance. SB0646 seeks to establish a fund managed by the IAC that allows public charter schools to apply for up to \$2000 per pupil annually for eligible facilities-related expenses. This funding does not impact the Blueprint formula or take funding away from any other public school students, as the funding would come from the State's General Fund. Instead, SB0646 will allow more Blueprint dollars to be spent IN the classroom on learning instead of ON the school's facility. It also sets strong parameters around spending accountability and transparency while ensuring there is standard bond bill language on repayment if a school should close or sell a privately-owned building.

Charter school students are public school students and they deserve to be educated in safe, welcoming, adequate school buildings just like their traditional public school peers. Just because a family decides to send their children to a public charter school and stay in the public school system, why do they have to attend, on average, an older, more in need of repair, discarded building? Why do charter school teachers have to teach in buildings that do not have adequate space, amenities, or supports? Why do charter school operators have to pull funding out of their Blueprint dollars to pay for their buildings, while traditional schools & LEAs pull from capital funding and general funds? Bottom line, it isn't equitable. Through your support, we can work to close inequities public charter school students, families, and teachers experience in their school buildings every day.

This year we celebrate 20 years of the charter school law in Maryland. It is about time we get to work funding public charter school facilities. We look forward to the hearing on March 7th and your support of SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. Please know that it is not only myself, but the larger charter school community across the state of more than 24,000 families, 50 schools in seven districts standing behind you.

Thank you,  
Regina Chadwick

**sb0646-support-rweiland-2023-03-06.pdf**

Uploaded by: Robert Weiland

Position: FAV

Dear Senator Young, et al.,

I am writing to advocate on behalf of Maryland's public charter school students, families, and teachers. As a parent, volunteer, parent representative, and Governing Council Chair at Monocacy Valley Montessori Public Charter School (MVMPCS), I urge you to support SB0646 School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment sponsored by Senator McCray.

As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, you will have the opportunity to vote on this bill on March 7th. Passing SB0646 is crucial for the more than 24,000 students statewide who attend public charter schools. These schools are an integral part of Maryland's public school portfolio, and the communities, teachers, and staff that work there, the districts that include them, and the students that attend them would all benefit directly from the much-needed funding that SB0646 would provide.

While local education authorities (LEAs) are able to use capital funding and general funds from other sources to support their facilities, operations, and maintenance, public charter schools are not afforded the same resources. SB0646 seeks to establish a fund managed by the IAC that allows public charter schools to apply for up to \$2000 per pupil annually for eligible facilities-related expenses. This funding would come from the State's General Fund and would not impact the Blueprint formula or take funding away from any other public school students. Instead, it would allow more Blueprint dollars to be spent in the classroom on learning instead of on the school's facility. The bill also includes strong parameters around spending accountability and transparency, as well as standard bond bill language on repayment if a school should close or sell a privately-owned building.

Charter school students are public school students and deserve to be educated in safe, welcoming, and adequate school buildings just like their traditional public school peers. Yet, on average, they attend older, more in need of repair, and discarded buildings. Charter school teachers also have to teach in buildings that do not have adequate space, amenities, or supports, while charter school operators have to pull funding out of their Blueprint dollars to pay for their buildings, while traditional schools and LEAs pull from capital funding and general funds. This is inequitable.

As a parent of a student at a public charter school, I have seen firsthand the positive impact that charter schools have had on my children's education. The focused and alternative learning methods have greatly benefited their academic success and overall acceptance in the classroom. However, our school has faced challenges with inadequate infrastructure, which can detract from the learning environment. That is why I strongly support this bill, which would establish a fund to help public charter schools secure good education facilities and complete necessary improvements. By providing financial security for the facility our charter schools, we can ensure that our students are learning in safe and welcoming environments. This will allow our faculty and staff to focus on providing the best possible education and services for our students.

As we celebrate 20 years of the charter school law in Maryland, it is time we fund public charter school facilities. I ask for your support of SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. Please know that not only myself, but the larger charter school community across the state of more than 24,000 families, 50 schools in seven districts, stands behind you.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,  
Robert Weiland

# **SB0646 Sage Magness-Hill.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sage Magness-Hill

Position: FAV



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6946 Dogwood Road Windsor Mill, MD 21244  
443.809.2100 | www.watershedpcs.org

Dear Senator Guzzone and members of the Budget & Taxation Committee,

My name is Sage Magness-Hill, I use they/them pronouns, I live in west Baltimore County, and I serve as Board President of Watershed Public Charter School. I am writing to you today in support of Senate Bill 0646, and will share why its passage is important to my school community.

In addition to my work on the Watershed Board, I am also the parent of two Watershed first graders. Last year, when it came time to enroll in kindergarten, I lived in Rodgers Forge in North Baltimore, and was zoned for a school that was great academically, but had very little diversity in regards to race, ethnicity, religion, and socioeconomic status. I had moved to Baltimore so that my children's lived experiences would be more diverse, so I looked at what other options I had in the way of public education in Baltimore County. There was only one other option besides my local elementary school: Watershed Public Charter School.

Watershed is currently the only charter school in Baltimore County, and emphasizes outdoor learning and arts integration. As an educator myself, I recognized something special about Watershed, that it was a school community that met all educational standards set forth nationally, state-wide, and county-wide, while approaching student learning differently than a traditional public school. Class sizes are small (22 students per class maximum) and students go outside for recess in rain, sun, or snow. Watershed also focuses on project-based learning, which encourages practical applications of subject matter across disciplines to culminate in a unit project. Since all charter schools in Maryland are public schools, there is no cost of attendance for families, and students are selected for seats based on a randomized lottery system held every February. Watershed is also diverse for a Baltimore County Public School, with a demographic breakdown of 51% Black/African American, 23% Caucasian, 14% Multiracial, 10% Hispanic, and 1% Asian/Pacific Islander. We have a 41% FARMS rate, and 13% of our students receive Special Education Services. With 283 students, our community is small and engaged. School attendance was 96% last year, which is remarkable considering our families come from 23 different zip codes and caregivers are solely responsible for transportation. Our families have also contributed over 2300 hours of volunteer service to Watershed this academic year. Our teachers and staff also love working at Watershed, and we saw a 98% retention rate last year (increasing steadily each year since our founding). While standardized testing isn't the only measure of student success, our students score above average for BCPS and outperform other local schools on MCAP. We have been honored to be a Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE) Green School, and are a current Maryland Nominee for US Green Ribbon Schools. Each year, our lottery and enrollment for Watershed steadily increases, and we average about 4-6 applications for every open seat.

The reason I come to you today to ask for your support of SB0646 is that despite all Watershed's successes, we have faced some real challenges with our physical space and the maintenance of our facilities. As you have seen in the IAC Report, most charter school buildings are older buildings that the charter school leases from a landlord, and with that comes significant issues that our district counterparts do not face. Watershed currently rents our school building and land from St. Gabriel's Catholic Church and the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Our rent alone is \$18,000 a month, and while our lease agreement states that our landlord would be responsible for building and grounds maintenance and repairs, we have found that many repair costs still end up coming out of our operating budget. While on paper, our



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6946 Dogwood Road Windsor Mill, MD 21244  
443.809.2100 | www.watershedpcs.org

operating budget looks larger than other Baltimore County Public Schools, our budget pays out salaries, rent, and utilities, in addition to the rent and overall building maintenance. District schools are not responsible for these same facilities and operating costs, as the buildings are owned and maintained by the school district. We do receive a per-pupil amount for education funding, but unfortunately sometimes that funding has to be spent on the classroom instead of in the classroom.

I also want to highlight a challenge that has been unique to Watershed as a charter school in Maryland. To date, according to MAPCS, Watershed is the only charter school in the state that received **zero** ESSER dollars as a per pupil and zero facilities dollars from ESSER III for COVID safety improvements. When I inquired about this with BCPS recently, I was told that BCPS decided to centralize this crucial funding and only disseminated it to certain schools in an opaque decision-making process (email attached below). Watershed was never given an opportunity to apply for these funds, because we were under the impression that all public schools in the county would receive a per-pupil amount from ESSER for educational materials and COVID facilities improvements. Watershed had to pay for all facility improvements and additional required cleaning staff out of our operating budget and educational funds. I have attached the email from our BCPS liaison explaining why Watershed did not receive these funds. Because what little money we have for facility repairs was spent on these COVID requirements that ESSER should have covered, as well as ongoing maintenance of the school, we have faced significant facilities issues in our building. These issues have disrupted the instructional time our teachers and students need, and take money away from educational materials and learning opportunities. We want our PPA Blueprint Dollars to be spent IN the classroom, not ON the classrooms, physical repairs and facilities maintenance.

Should SB0646 pass, it would help charter schools like Watershed tremendously. It would ensure that our school community has the same facility experience as those in traditional schools with safe, secure, well-maintained physical spaces that enhance learning. With funding specifically earmarked for our facility, we can put all our educational funds towards actually educating our students. With what I have shared about all the great things Watershed is currently doing for our students, imagine how much more our school community could thrive if we had the same well-maintained facilities as all the other public schools in Baltimore County and in Maryland. Again, I strongly urge you to support SB0646, because all public school students deserve fair access to a healthy and safe learning environment.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to share Watershed's story with you today. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at [Board@Watershedpcs.org](mailto:Board@Watershedpcs.org)

With Maryland Pride,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sage Magness-Hill". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sage Magness-Hill  
President, Board of Directors  
Watershed Public Charter School



President Board <board@watershedpcs.org>

## Scheduling a Check-in

**Elmendorf, Douglas C.** <delmendorf@bcps.org>

Fri, Mar 3, 2023 at 9:55 AM

To: "board@watershedpcs.org" <board@watershedpcs.org>, "jlehson@watershedpcs.org" <jlehson@watershedpcs.org>, "Kirk, Casey" <ckirk@bcps.org>

I just got off the phone with Whit. The short answer is that BCPS decided to make centralized decisions about the funding as opposed to doling out a certain amount or percentage to each school. As such, WPCS among many other individual schools were not identified as recipients of the funding for facilities purposes. Having said that, WPCS benefitted from ESSER in several other ways, as we discussed, including devices, additional 15 mins/day, bonuses for teachers, tutoring \$, and special education compensatory services, if applicable.

Hope this helps,

**Douglas C. Elmendorf, Ed.D.**

Executive Director, Department of Academic Programs and Options

Division of Curriculum and Instruction

Baltimore County Public Schools

443-809-3033



**From:** President Board <board@watershedpcs.org>

**Sent:** Thursday, March 2, 2023 3:13 PM

**To:** Elmendorf, Douglas C. <delmendorf@bcps.org>; jlehson@watershedpcs.org; Kirk, Casey <ckirk@bcps.org>

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[Quoted text hidden]

# **Sen McCray Letter for Senate Budget and Tax SB0646**

Uploaded by: Samantha Little

Position: FAV

Dear Senator McCray,

Hello! I am Samantha Little and I am writing to you today, an IA at Monocacy Valley Montessori Public Charter School (MVMPCS), to thank you for sponsoring SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#). MVMPCS was the first charter school in Maryland when it opened in the fall of 2002. We have consistently provided a high-quality Montessori education to Frederick County Public School students. In the fall of 2022, we began planning our school expansion to include an innovative Montessori high school program. We will welcome our first cohort of high school students in fall 2023. We would not have been able to achieve this goal without the sizable grant awarded by the Maryland State Department of Education to support “the expansion of existing high-quality public charter schools.” The drain on our resources due to covering facilities costs inhibits this type of innovation.

As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why this bill is essential to pass. Maryland public charter schools are an integral part of the public school portfolio in Maryland, serving more than 24,000 students statewide. The communities with public charter schools, the teachers and staff that work there, the districts that include them, and the students that attend them would all benefit directly from the much needed funding SB0646 would supply.

LEAs are able to utilize capital funding and general funds from other sources, not available to public charter schools, to support their facilities, operations, & maintenance. SB0646 seeks to establish a fund managed by the IAC that allows public charter schools to apply for up to \$2000 per pupil annually for eligible facilities-related expenses. This funding does not impact the Blueprint formula or take funding away from any other public school students, as the funding would come from the State’s General Fund. Instead, SB0646 will allow more Blueprint dollars to be spent IN the classroom on learning instead of ON the school’s facility. It also sets strong parameters around spending accountability and transparency while ensuring there is standard bond bill language on repayment if a school should close or sell a privately-owned building.

Charter school students are public school students and they deserve to be educated in safe, welcoming, adequate school buildings just like their traditional public school peers. Just because a family decides to send their children to a public charter school and stay in the public school system, why do they have to attend, on average, an older, more in need of repair, discarded building? Why do charter school teachers have to teach in buildings that do not have adequate space, amenities, or supports? Why do charter school operators have to pull funding out of their Blueprint dollars to pay for their buildings, while traditional schools & LEAs pull from capital funding and general funds? Bottom line, it isn’t equitable. Through your support, we can work to close inequities public charter school students, families, and teachers experience in their school buildings every day.

This year we celebrate 20 years of the charter school law in Maryland. It is about time we get to work funding public charter school facilities. We look forward to the hearing on March 7th and your support of SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. Please know that it is not only myself, but the larger charter school community across the state of more than 24,000 families, 50 schools in seven districts standing behind you.

Thank you,  
Amy Dorman

# Form Letter for Senate Budget and Tax SB0646\_testi

Uploaded by: Sanya Whitaker

Position: FAV

Dear Senator Karen Lewis Young,

I am Sanya Whitaker and I am writing to you today, as a charter school parent, to ask you for your support of SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray.

As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why this bill is essentially to pass. Maryland public charter schools are an integral part of the public school portfolio in Maryland, serving more than 24,000 students statewide. The communities with public charter schools, the teachers and staff that work there, the districts that include them, and the students that attend them would all benefit directly from the much needed funding SB0646 would supply.

LEAs are able to utilize capital funding and general funds from other sources, not available to public charter schools, to support their facilities, operations, & maintenance. SB0646 seeks to establish a fund managed by the IAC that allows public charter schools to apply for up to \$2000 per pupil annually for eligible facilities-related expenses. This funding does not impact the Blueprint formula or take funding away from any other public school students, as the funding would come from the State's General Fund. Instead, SB0646 will allow more Blueprint dollars to be spent IN the classroom on learning instead of ON the school's facility. It also sets strong parameters around spending accountability and transparency while ensuring there is standard bond bill language on repayment if a school should close or sell a privately-owned building.

Charter school students are public school students and they deserve to be educated in safe, welcoming, adequate school buildings just like their traditional public school peers. Just because a family decides to send their children to a public charter school and stay in the public school system, why do they have to attend, on average, an older, more in need of repair, discarded building? Why do charter school teachers have to teach in buildings that do not have adequate space, amenities, or supports? Why do charter school operators have to pull funding out of their Blueprint dollars to pay for their buildings, while traditional schools & LEAs pull from capital funding and general funds? Bottom line, it isn't equitable. Through your support, we can work to close inequities public charter school students, families, and teachers experience in their school buildings every day.

This year we celebrate 20 years of the charter school law in Maryland. It is about time we get to work funding public charter school facilities. We look forward to the hearing on March 7th and your support of SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. Please know that it is not only myself, but the larger charter school community across the state of more than 24,000 families, 50 schools in seven districts standing behind you.

Thank you,

Sanya Whitaker

# **SB0646 Savona Rizzo Written Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Savona Rizzo

Position: FAV

March 6, 2023

Chairman Guzzone and members of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee,

I am an 8th grader at Frederick Classical Charter School. I will meet you in Annapolis tomorrow with friends from charter schools in Frederick County. We represent over 24,000 charter school students across the state who need SB0646 bill to be passed.

It has been 20 years that Maryland charter schools have gone without any public funding to pay for our school buildings. The "Per Pupil Allocation" provides operational funding which is commensurate with our peers. Unfortunately, charter schools do not get to spend all of this money on staff and student learning, with a large part of it spent on rent. My school's building costs \$730,000 every year, or about 17% of our PPA, and will increase due to inflation. Passing this bill would mean we can immediately hire the teachers and specialists we need as well as fix or improve our buildings. In the future, we can have real school buildings, with outdoor green spaces and enough classrooms, maybe with nice cafeterias and regular gyms and science labs and working heating and AC. I have included exhibits below, pictures of three of our charter schools in Frederick County. The outdoor play areas are just parking lots.

Please understand that charter school funding does not take anything away from other public school students and this bill does not impact them. We are public school students, too, but we do not receive a fair and equitable level of public funding compared to our peers in traditional public schools. We are each being given on average \$2,000 less every single year, and just because we choose to attend a different kind of public school. This bill will cost about \$48 million per year, which is not much compared to the overall education spending in Maryland, but it would make a huge difference for more than 50 schools across the whole state.

I love my school. We have small class sizes. We have great teachers and staff that enjoy being there and teaching us. It is a supportive, positive learning environment with a special way of teaching. We have a very diverse group of students and we learn from each other. We would have liked to have a better school building and not be located in commercial area with a warehouse and offices next door. We do the best with what we have. We know our building is much nicer than some other charter schools. For example, Monocacy Valley Montessori has really bad plumbing problems and last year had to miss school because of it. They are excited to buy another building after looking for a really long time, but the one they found is actually a doctor's office building. They still will not have greenspace.

Please support this bill, SB0646, and make sure that it is mandatory to include in the budget every year. Public charter school students deserve your support.

Sincerely,  
Savona Rizzo  
8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Frederick Classical Charter School  
Frederick, MD

Exhibit 1:  
Frederick Classical Charter School Entrance and Outdoor Playspace



Exhibit 2:  
Monocacy Valley Montessori Public Charter School Entrance and Blacktop Playspace



Exhibit 3:  
Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School Entrance and Outdoor Playspaces



# **Charter School Facility Funding letter.pdf**

Uploaded by: Tamara Van Orden

Position: FAV

March 6, 2023

Dear Legislators,

I am the mother of five children who have all attended a public charter school in Frederick County, with my youngest three still currently in attendance. I am writing to you today to ask you for your support of SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray.

As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why I feel this bill is so important to pass. Although Maryland laws allow for the existence of charter schools, the laws do not give charter schools equitable support or funding. SB0646 would supply much needed funding which would specifically help to alleviate the unfair rent burden that our charter school carries.

LEAs are able to utilize capital funding and general funds from other sources, not available to public charter schools, to support their facilities, operations, & maintenance. SB0646 seeks to establish a fund managed by the IAC that allows public charter schools to apply for up to \$2000 per pupil annually for eligible facilities-related expenses. This funding does not impact the Blueprint formula or take funding away from any other public school students, as the funding would come from the State's General Fund. Instead, SB0646 will allow more Blueprint dollars to be spent IN the classroom on learning instead of ON the school's facility. It also sets strong parameters around spending accountability and transparency while ensuring there is standard bond bill language on repayment if a school should close or sell a privately-owned building.

Charter school students are public school students and they deserve to be educated in safe, welcoming, adequate school buildings just like their traditional public school peers. Every decision at our charter school is made with cost in mind and we get by with the bare bones options. We have small groups of students that need to be pulled out by a specialist to meet their advanced academic needs and no extra space in our school for them to go to meet. Our classrooms are small and measured precisely to meet the minimum required standards with no extra wiggle room because we needed to fit as many rooms as possible into as small of a space as possible. We do not have a space in the building where a band can meet and practice music without disturbing the surrounding classrooms, so we therefore do not offer band like every other traditional elementary school in our county. Our gym has support pillars in the middle and lacks a standard wood floor or traditional mechanized basketball goals. When our school was built, we could not afford those upgrades without negatively impacting the funding for our teachers and students. Our library doubles as an art room and Spanish room at certain times of the day because we do not have enough money to further build out the school. The recess area at our charter school is a fenced off portion of a parking lot with very minimal equipment for which we had to fundraise. Our rent is paid with our per pupil allocated funds, as is our security system, and any maintenance repairs or school improvements or expansions. These are huge expenses every year that other public schools do not incur. Traditional public schools are able to give a greater portion of their funds to classroom materials, teacher training, and programs that will improve the educational experience of their students. Our scholars deserve the same access to those allocated dollars.

Why does the choice to attend a public charter school have to come with these costs and trade-offs. Just because a family decides to send their children to a public charter school, which is 100% staying in the public school system, why do they have to attend, on average, an older, more in need of repair, discarded building? Why do charter school teachers have to teach in buildings that do not have adequate space, amenities, or supports? Why do charter school operators have to pull funding out of their Blueprint dollars to pay for their buildings, while traditional schools & LEAs pull from capital funding and general funds? Bottom line, it isn't equitable. Through your support, we can work to close inequities public charter school students, families, and teachers experience in their school buildings every day.

This year we celebrate 20 years of the charter school law in Maryland. It is about time we get to work funding public charter school facilities. We look forward to the hearing on March 7th and your support of SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. Please know that it is not only myself, but the larger charter school community across the state of more than 24,000 families, 50 schools in seven districts standing behind you.

Thank you,  
Tammy Van Orden

**Afya\_Baltimore\_SB0646\_testimony\_3\_6\_23.pdf**

Uploaded by: Will McKenna

Position: FAV



March 6, 2023

Dear Maryland State Senate Budget and Tax Committee,

Please accept this letter in support of SB0646: Facilities Funding for Public Charter Schools.

[Afya Baltimore Inc. \(ABI\)](#) is a nonprofit organization responsible for managing public charter schools in Baltimore City. Afya is a Swahili word for health, and health and wellness are at the heart of all that we do. ABI provides the foundational and operational support necessary for our schools to do the work of helping Baltimore's children to live healthy, balanced lives: intellectually, socially/emotionally, and physically.

ABI operates two schools across three facilities - The Tunbridge School (Elementary and Middle School at the York Rd. Campus) and The Belair-Edison School (Elementary School at the Brehms Ln. Campus and Middle School at the Brendan Ave. Campus). Two of these facilities are in historical former parochial school buildings which we own. The third facility is in a Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) owned building which we lease.

The two operator-owned buildings were in great disrepair when we purchased them in 2007 and 2010, as they had been pretty much abandoned for years prior as the Catholic schools went out of business. Our district-owned building was in poor condition as well when we began leasing it in 2016. At that time, and every year since, we have invested in our buildings. From our per pupil funding, we pay for:

- debt service on two of our buildings, and rent on the third
- capital improvements each summer - both as a requirement of our loans and for the high standards we hold for our school communities
- utilities - with outdated HVAC, drafty buildings that are not energy efficient
- facility and cleaning staff to cover 159,000 square feet across three campuses
- security - comprehensive security systems including cameras and monitoring systems
- insurance - comprehensive property and liability insurance
- landscaping - annual upkeep across five acres of grounds, including planting, forestry work, and mulching
- regular upkeep and repairs on everything from signage to graffiti removal to lighting

On average in our schools, we spend 10% of our per pupil allocation on these things. Much of the money we spend ON these facilities could be spent IN our classrooms, with the passage of SB0646.



SB0646 is a smart piece of legislation that aligns well with the mission of charter schools— the reimbursable funds are managed by the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC), allowing for accountability and transparency with Maryland State’s General Fund money, and holding public charter schools to a high standard with autonomy to make decisions that work best for their school communities.

Charter school students are public school students; charter school staff are union employees — they deserve to be in 21st century buildings as much as their colleagues and classmates in traditional buildings do. Families and teachers that choose to be in a charter school - a choice which is their right to make according to Maryland State Law - should not have to be in older buildings that are more in need of repair.

We hope you will support the 24,000 students, 50 schools, and 7 districts in Maryland with the passage of SB0646. I am happy to discuss this bill and the positive impact it will have on our schools any time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Will McKenna".

Will McKenna  
Founder and Executive Director  
Afya Baltimore Inc. (ABI)  
[wmckenna@afyabaltimore.org](mailto:wmckenna@afyabaltimore.org)  
410-736-8980



2116 Holder Ave,  
Suite 100  
Baltimore, MD 21207

3/6/2023

Dear Maryland State Senate Budget and Tax Committee,

Please accept this letter in support of SB0646: Facilities Funding for Public Charter Schools. Communication Systems Design has been working with Afya Baltimore Inc. (ABI) since 2008, providing comprehensive IT services and products to their three facilities - The Tunbridge School, The Belair-Edison School | Brehms Campus and The Belair-Edison School | Brendan Campus - in the areas of computer hardware, security cameras and surveillance, and internet access.

ABI has a high standard for the equipment students' use, commitment to upgrading and maintaining hardware, and using the latest technology to ensure its schools are safe for students and staff alike. This commitment takes an extraordinary financial investment on an annual basis, for which ABI's current funding source almost exclusively comes from its per pupil allocation. Facilities funding for all public charter schools, including ABI's, would be incredibly helpful.

We ask the Maryland State Senate Budget & Tax Committee to support SB0646: Facilities Funding for Public Charter Schools, which will provide equitable funding for the 48 public charter schools and 24,000 kids who attend them in Maryland.

Sincerely,

Troy W. Stokes Sr, CLVES

*Troy W. Stokes, Sr*

Troy W. Stokes  
Project Manager  
(410) 594-0900 (Office)  
(410) 929-2116 (Mobile)



March 6, 2023

Dear Maryland State Senate Budget and Tax Committee:

Please accept this letter in support of SB0646: Facilities Funding for Public Charter Schools.

Craig Gaulden Davis has been working with Afya Baltimore Inc. (ABI) since 2019, providing comprehensive architectural services and assisting ABI with strategic planning related to its facilities.

We have worked extensively on two of the three ABI facilities, The Tunbridge School and The Belair-Edison School | Brendan Campus, which are in historical former parochial school buildings. We also work on school buildings around Baltimore and around the state so we are quite familiar with all aspects of facility enhancement and maintenance.

ABI has a 10-year commitment to facility upgrades - it's of utmost importance to keep these buildings in great shape while updating for 21st century learning and the challenges of this with limited resources are many.

Per pupil reimbursable funds from the successful passage of SB0646, which will pay for things like debt service, utilities, cleaning crews, safety/security, insurance, landscaping, regular repairs and maintenance, allows more money to be allocated to the children and the classrooms. Saved funding also allows allocation of funds to the capital expenses/architectural upgrades/renovations so desperately needed in these old buildings. For this reason we ask the Maryland State Senate Budget & Tax Committee to support SB0646: Facilities Funding for Public Charter Schools, which will provide equitable funding for the 48 public charter schools and 24,000 students who attend them in Maryland.

Sincerely,

CRAIG GAULDEN DAVIS, INC.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James H. Determan".

James H. Determan, FAIA  
Principal



410.261.5090

3/3/2023

3000 Chestnut Ave. Suite 11  
Baltimore, MD 21211

firstfloorgraphics.com

Dear Maryland State Senate Budget and Tax Committee,

First Floor Graphics has been working with Afya Baltimore Inc. (ABI) and the ABI Schools since 2015.

We have hundreds of clients but this is one organization that has consistently stood out from all the others. From the top down, throughout the whole organization, there is a sense of integrity as well as compassion for their families, all of them. It doesn't matter if one is a student or a vendor or a delivery person.

The high standards that exist for these Baltimore City public charter schools — The Tunbridge School and The Belair-Edison School — and their buildings and grounds have to be paid for with school funds which means that those dollars are not going directly into the classrooms. First Floor Graphics produces signs and one of the things we contribute is to help monitor the wear and tear of the signs from the many students who use the facilities. It is a year-round effort to keep the grounds clean, graffiti-free, and looking fresh. I first learned of the "broken window theory" from ABI and that motivates us to pay attention to the facilities and grounds immediately, to avoid further damage and maintain school pride.

In light of these high standards, why would we not want to offer every possible opportunity to support and enhance this kind of environment? The organization and the 50 public charter schools of Maryland are asking for your support to pass legislation that will help cover expenses for facilities, utilities, rent, securities, and landscaping, so that the money they are allocated for the students can be focused in the classrooms.

There have been days working beside the cleaning crews where I have been inspired to work harder and more cheerfully. The crews show up when the students are not in the building so that they can work uninterrupted and faster. That is smart use of time and resources. Coming into a very clean, colorful building has a tangible effect on the students and staff. We all feel better and behave better when our space is clean and orderly.

What better way to tell the students that we value them and respect them?

The students and staff and communities deserve these clean and beautiful spaces. They could also receive more classroom support if the dollars that are spent on signs and trash removal and utilities and cleaning bathrooms were available through reimbursable funds from the state instead of coming out of the school's per pupil budget.

Please make the decision for the best of the students and support SB0646: Facilities Funding for Public Charter Schools.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carol Greene".

Carol Greene, President

In 2019 we researched the history of our three buildings and wrote a series of blog posts about them. Simply put: We love our schools. These buildings in Govans and Belair-Edison are filled with history and we've filled them with the hopes and joys of the present and future. We invest in their daily maintenance keeping them shiny and clean, safe and secure, both inside and outside, and try our very best to make important capital improvements annually. **Facilities funding support from Maryland will help us continue our work in these beautiful old buildings and make our teaching and learning and gathering even better as per pupil dollars can stay IN the classroom where they belong.**

— Will McKenna, Founder and Executive Director | Afya Baltimore Inc. (ABI)

See the series of blog posts on our website at [www.afyabaltimore.org/contact/blog](http://www.afyabaltimore.org/contact/blog)

## These Old Buildings | Introduction

Posted March 25, 2019

I went to [St. John Catholic School](#), in Westminster, MD, from first through fifth grade. I wasn't a very curious student. The most vivid memories I have of my education during that time include running from the nuns, playing tackle ball at recess, and being asked by Sister Sarah, after getting caught spit-balling in the back of the classroom, if I was prepared, at the early age of 10, to die.

It is the gym at St. John's that I remember most. I was at home in the gym, where I played basketball for hours on end. The gym was cramped—a shot from one end to the other would be well within Steph Curry's range—but echoed with cheer and character.



Two of the three schools which Afya Baltimore Inc. (ABI) operates are located in former Catholic school buildings. [Afya Public Charter School](#) (opened 2008) is located in the old [Shrine of the Little Flower School](#) in Belair-Edison. [Tunbridge Public Charter School's](#) building (opened 2010) was once the home of the [St. Mary of the Assumption School](#) in Govans. Both of these schools have long and beautiful histories, much like St. John's. Our third school, [Brehms Lane Public Charter School](#) (opened 2016), is in a City Schools' owned building, also in Belair-Edison, and has an interesting history of its own.

As we renovate and take care of these old buildings, we aim to amplify our mission and infuse our vision of the work. We want to make these school buildings— which include gymnasiums, chapels turned into science labs, old oak church pews, stained glass windows, stonework that was quarried and laid by master craftsmen, bomb shelters, cupolas, spiral staircases, and secret spaces— our very own. We also try to respect our past, the history of our old buildings, and the people who lived and worked and played in them before our time. For a detailed history of these special places, visit the lobby in each of our facilities, and see for yourself the rich history we wish to preserve.

In the coming weeks and months, we will be releasing a series of blog posts to honor the histories of our three buildings. Enjoy.

## These Old Buildings | 2800 Brendan Ave.

Posted March 27, 2019

*A Series of Stories About the School Buildings in Which We Live, Work, and Play*

### *Introduction*

Afya opened its doors for the first time in August 2008 with support from the [Abell Foundation](#) and the [Reinvestment Fund](#). The first class that year had 115 students. Eighty-one years earlier, another school started its first year in this same spot, The Shrine of the Little Flower School. On September 14, 1927, The Shrine started with 227 students and had 12 rooms for students and staff. The church, of the same name, was located in the basement of the property, and its entrance faced north, towards Kentucky Avenue.



Over the years, The Shrine's parish grew dramatically. In 1946, a convent for the nuns was built. In 1951, a new church was constructed. In 1956, the Shrine added two additional wings to the building. At its peak, enrollment at the Shrine's school reached 1,700 students. As reported by Paul McMullen, in his [article](#) about Shrine's history, "Greg Malanowski, 61, was a second-grader that year [1959-69]. 'There were 80 kids in my first-grade classroom, and there were two other first-grade classes,' said Malanowski. The Scout troop was so large, half of us met on Monday, the other half on Friday, at the hut in Herring Run Park."

The Shrine thrived for many decades and then, as Baltimore's population began to decline in the 1980s and 90s, struggled to survive. Eventually, in 2005, the school closed.

The old church is now Afya's cafeteria. The convent is now the [Green School of Baltimore](#). Afya has been operating for more than a decade, and in August of 2018, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners voted to merge Afya with Brehms Lane, to create a dual facility pre-k through eighth grade school.

The future of the Brendan Ave. property is changing all the time. Still, in a single place, a single space, the old and the new, the past and the future, mingle as one.

## These Old Buildings | 3536 Brehms Ln.

Posted April 1, 2019

*A Series of Stories About the School Buildings in Which We Live, Work, and Play*

*Introduction*

*2800 Brendan Ave.*

*5504 York Rd.*



Belair, or “Belle Aire” as it was known back in 1735, has a rich history in our city. The community originated through a land grant which was issued to Daniel Scott in 1731 and was home to a mere 200 residents around the mid 1800s. Now, with a bolstering population of over 30,000 in the combined Belair-Edison community, it is home to Brehms Lane Public Charter School. Before it became a school for our children, Brehms Lane was in a large area owned by three of the most prominent men at the time in Baltimore: George Brehm, George Lamley, and George Erdman. Not surprisingly, the area became known as Georgetown, with George Brehm owning some 624 acres. Brehm also owned many breweries in the area and underground tunnels have been found where the brewery stored its ales.

The community started to grow in the 1920s and '30s and by the 1940s, when the neighborhood Belair-Edison was officially established, there were more than 1,700 dwellings in the area. This was around the same time that enrollment at The Shrine of the Little Flower (now Afya Public Charter School) began to boom. In 1936, Brehms Lane Elementary School opened its doors. In 1992, Brehms Lane underwent renovations, allowing for new opportunities for students. In 2015 (2016?), Afya Baltimore Inc. (ABI) converted Brehms Lane to a neighborhood public charter school and additional renovations have occurred, including the construction of new bathrooms, repainting, landscaping and newly built play area, and a host of other work to enhance the learning experience for students and families alike.

## These Old Buildings | 5504 York Rd.

Posted April 1, 2019

*A Series of Stories About the School Buildings in Which We Live, Work, and Play*

*Introduction*

*2800 Brendan Ave.*



Tunbridge opened in the fall of 2010 for students in Pre-K to 3rd grade. St. Mary of the Assumption's roots in the Govans neighborhood of Baltimore City go much deeper. The [church](#) itself opened in 1850 as the only church in North Baltimore at the time. In

September of 1874, the parish opened St. Mary of the Assumption School located on Homeland Ave., which was run by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. This Catholic school flourished for over a century. As enrollments continued to climb in the early 1900s, the school needed more space. In the fall of 1952, a new school building and convent were completed at what is now 5504 York Rd. These buildings sit just north of the St. Mary of the Assumption church and rectory.

St. Mary of the Assumption School continued to thrive for many years in its new space. After 135 years of educating children, St. Mary of the Assumption School closed its doors in May of 2009 due to declining enrollment. Ms. Phelan, the principle of St. Mary of the Assumption School at the time of the closure is quoted in the [Archdiocese of Baltimore Catholic Review](#) as saying, "God closes one door, and opens windows."

Tunbridge opened its doors— and windows— for the first time to about 200 students on August 30, 2010, after renovating the main office and cafeteria, and branding the building in orange, yellow, and green. The school added a grade each year until we became fully grown to 8th grade. In 2014, Tunbridge renovated the convent, converting this residence into classrooms, community space, and a fitness room for our middle schoolers. Thus, in a single place, a single space, the old and the new, the past and the future, mingle as one.

# **SB0646 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Zayn Ak

Position: FAV



# CHESAPEAKE LIGHTHOUSE FOUNDATION

Lighting The Way For Excellence in Education!

6151 Chevy Chase Drive Laurel, MD 20707 P: (301) 776-2300 F: (240) 547-2571

March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023

To: Budget and Taxation Committee

Re: Favorable Testimony SB0646

Dear Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee,

As a constituent and CEO of the largest charter school operator in Maryland, I ask you to support SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray. Thank you for the work you are already doing to support high-quality public education options for all students in our state.

As former teacher, school principal and current leader of six highly successful charter schools with an enrollment of over 3,600 students I can attest to the need for resources in the charter school community, especially for school facilities. All six of our locations are majority-minority schools and are making great strides in closing the achievement gap for all student populations. All our teachers are proud members of the Maryland State Education Association and the local bargaining unit.

Maryland spends billions of dollars on school facilities every year and charter schools do not receive any capital funding although they represent 3% of the student population. If approved and fully funded, this bill would only cost \$48 million to the state. This would provide charter school students with high-quality, public-school facilities.

Maryland public charter schools are an integral part of the public-school portfolio in Maryland, serving more than 24,000 students statewide —the majority of whom are low-income and students of color—with the opportunity to achieve academically at high levels and launch bright futures. I ask you to support and prioritize SB0646 so that the next generation of youth in our state have access to the opportunities they deserve in safe and high-quality facilities.

Here are a few key data points:

- 1) Studies show that charter schools deliver outstanding educational options to students nationwide and particularly to students from low-income backgrounds. For example, a 2020 study from Harvard University found greater academic gains for student cohorts in charter schools, with the difference amounting to almost an additional half year of learning. Black students and students from low-income backgrounds made the greatest gains.
- 2) A 2022 survey from The Harris Poll found broad public support for charter schools: 93% of parents agree that one size doesn't fit all in education, 84% of parents agree that charter schools should be available to families, and 83% of parents agree that education has become a more political issue to them than it was in the past.



- 3) Charter schools on average spend \$2,000 per child on facilities out of their per pupil allocations, which are meant for instruction and other support services.
- 4) Most states with charter schools provide some form of facilities funding to charter schools. The District of Columbia provides \$3,200 dollars per child for charter school facilities. Maryland does not provide any capital funding to charter schools.
- 5) One of the unforeseen consequences of the Maryland Blueprint funding is that it will decrease funding for a number of charter schools starting in 2025. The fact that charter schools are already underfunded by 15 to 20% due to lack of facilities funding may lead to the closure of some of the best charter schools as a result of Blueprint funding cuts. This bill would ensure equitable and sustainable funding for all schools.

The last few years have been challenging, but charter schools are committed to delivering the very best education to students and serving as an essential resource for our state.

As you continue to make needed investments in education, I ask you to support \$48M for SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) and communicate your support. I know that we are all united behind the same goal to ensure all students are provided with equal access to high-quality, public education options.

Sincerely,

*Yilmaz Zayn Ak, Ed.S.*

Chief Executive Officer

Chesapeake Lighthouse Foundation

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### **3.6.23 SB646 Testimony\_UNFAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Christian Gobel

Position: UNF

**Testimony in Opposition of Senate Bill 646  
School Construction – Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment**

**Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
March 7, 2023**

**Christian Gobel  
Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association opposes Senate Bill 646. Senate Bill 646 establishes the Public Charter School Facility Fund, which would provide annual funding directly to public charter schools for certain expenses associated with public charter school facilities. Under the bill, the annual funding from the Public Charter School Facility Fund is provided directly to the public charter school and may not be paid to a local government or county board.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Under Maryland's Public Charter School Program, individuals or groups seeking to establish a public charter school must demonstrate as part of their initial application that the proposed public charter school has secured a facility that is suitable for the instruction of students.<sup>1</sup> Public charter schools may also be eligible to use existing school sites or buildings, subject to the approval of the state superintendent and the local board of education.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, public charter schools in Maryland are eligible to participate in the Maryland Charter Schools Program Grants.<sup>3</sup> Public charter

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<sup>1</sup> MD Code, Education, § 9-104(a)(6)(ii).

<sup>2</sup> MD Code, Education, § 9-111.

<sup>3</sup> Maryland State Department of Education, *Maryland Charter Schools Program Grants*, <https://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Pages/Charter-Schools/CSPGrant.aspx> (last accessed March 4, 2023).



schools may be eligible to receive up to \$900,000 under this grant program, and may use the funds to conduct facilities repairs, obtain equipment and materials, and other expenditures related to the preparation and operation of the charter school.<sup>4</sup> Public charter school buildings are also exempt from property taxes.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, public charter schools receive public funding from local boards of education that is commensurate with the amount of funds received by other public schools in the local jurisdiction, and public charter schools may receive surplus educational materials, furniture, supplies, and other equipment from the State Board of Education or the local county board of education.<sup>6</sup> Finally, public charter schools are eligible for funding for capital construction and systemic renovation projects if they are operating from a facility owned by a local school system and the funding request is submitted by the local school system in which the charter school operates. In sum, public charter schools have ample opportunity and various avenues to pursue funding for facilities.

Local education agencies are facing increasing fiscal challenges due to their funding obligations under the Blueprint, the increased cost of compensatory education from better identification methods for eligibility enrollment in the free and reduced-price meals programs, and ongoing capital projects. SB 646 would require approximately \$50 million in taxpayer funding annually, which would only benefit charter schools.

Senate Bill 646 runs counter to our union's core principles by establishing a facilities fund that is exclusively for the use of public charter schools at the expense of public funding that is not available for traditional public schools and distributes funding outside the control of local governing bodies, including local boards of education. For these reasons, MSEA cannot support Senate Bill 646.

**We urge the committee to issue an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 646.**

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<sup>4</sup> Maryland State Department of Education, *Grants for the Start-Up, Replication, and Expansion of Public Charter Schools*, p. 1 (April 2022), [https://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/Charter-Schools/GrantPurpose2022\\_Rev.pdf](https://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/Charter-Schools/GrantPurpose2022_Rev.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> MD Code, Education, § 9-112.

<sup>6</sup> MD Code, Education, § 9-109.

# **SB646 - School Construction - Public Charter Schoo**

Uploaded by: Dawana Sterrette

Position: UNF

# BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Brandon M. Scott**  
Mayor, City of Baltimore

**Johnette A. Richardson**  
Chair, Baltimore City Board  
of School Commissioners

**Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises**  
Chief Executive Officer

**Testimony of the  
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners  
In Opposition of Senate Bill 646  
School Construction – Public Charter School Facility Fund – Establishment**

**March 7, 2023**

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners (the Board) opposes Senate Bill 646 because it would carve out school construction funding for a small select group of schools, allowing them to be funded ahead of public schools that may have more serious facility issues.

The Board currently has 31 charter schools within the City Schools portfolio. Of those 31 schools, about half are housed in City Schools owned buildings. As you know, the public school construction program is overseen by the IAC. In its requirements, the IAC receives a list of schools, by priority, from the local school board and the IAC then grades those projects and provides funding based upon available school construction dollars. In making a priority listing in Baltimore City, those charter schools that are housed in Baltimore City Public School System owned buildings are considered for inclusion into the priority list for funding. Those charter schools that are not within City Schools' buildings have an operator that has the ability to creatively raise funds and work with other organizations to tackle facility issues.

The Board supports the diverse portfolio of traditional schools, Charter schools, Transformation schools and Contract schools within the school district. However, the proposed legislation would impose tremendous cost on City Schools by placing further strain on the already limited facilities funding the district receives. And, even if this is an additional source of school construction funds, solely for charters, it then allows charters to compete against schools in its own district and possibly receive funds ahead of a school that is in far worse condition.

It is well-established that City Schools faces significant capital needs for the school system's buildings. In addition, City Schools is a district that is regularly closing and merging schools, as well as returning buildings via surplus to the City of Baltimore, because of lower enrollment and the inability to adequately support facility needs. The idea of carving out additional state funding for charter school facilities when there is already insufficient funding to support the current facility needs in Baltimore City creates inequities between charter and traditional schools – both of which are part of the public school system under Maryland law.

City Schools estimates that more than \$3.86 billion (in today's dollars) is needed to bring all City Schools school buildings up to minimally acceptable standards through repairs and replacements to the remaining facilities that are still in need of a complete overhaul due to

# BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Brandon M. Scott**  
Mayor, City of Baltimore

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of School Commissioners

**Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises**  
Chief Executive Officer

their age and conditions, even after the 21st Century School Buildings Program and the Built to Learn Act of 2020 have been fully implemented.

With the 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Buildings Program, the school board pays approximately \$30 million dollars, per year, in bond payments in order to support the construction of those newly renovated buildings; \$30 million that could have been used for instruction, interventions and other school related teaching expenses. Charter schools have the same ability to seek funding for facility issues from outside entities and pay for those costs. The issue of not receiving facility funding for charters was well discussed during the passage of the Public School Charter law in Maryland.

Also, given current inflationary pressures on construction costs, there is ample evidence that facility issues with in City Schools is even more concerning and the \$3.86 billion significantly underestimates the full costs of addressing these unmet systemic facility renovation needs, and that even more funding would be required to complete a full portfolio replacement to the educational standards recommended by the IAC, and utilized by other school districts in Maryland and across the nation.

For the foregoing reasons, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners opposes Senate Bill 646 and urges an unfavorable report.

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# **SB 646.Charter School Facility Fund.pdf**

Uploaded by: John Woolums

Position: UNF

**BILL:** Senate Bill 646  
**TITLE:** School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment  
**POSITION:** OPPOSE  
**DATE:** March 7, 2023  
**COMMITTEES:** Budget and Taxation  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes Senate Bill 646 which would establish the Public Charter School Facility Fund and mandate new per pupil payments to charter schools to fund school facility related costs.

MABE supports the establishment of high performing public charter schools to accomplish the original intent of the 2003 Public Charter School Act. MABE supported the balanced approach of this landmark legislation to "to establish an alternative means within the existing public school system in order to provide innovative learning opportunities and creative educational approaches to improve the education of students." In 2015, major revisions were enacted to further enhance the ability of high performing charter schools to operate with greater autonomy, while preserving strong accountability measures.

MABE certainly agrees that local boards of education should work with the public charter schools in their jurisdiction to ensure that the school facility needs of the public charter schools are addressed. However, MABE opposes this bill because we believe that public charter school facility funding decisions should continue to be addressed at the local level, in the context of the locally approved charter application and charter agreement, and local school system facility funding priorities and decisions. MABE opposes this bill's proposal to create a targeted subsidy for charter school facilities.

As this Committee knows, MABE consistently advocates that federal and state laws and regulations preserve the governance role of local boards of education. MABE's support for local board governance authority and autonomy extends to all public schools, including public charter schools. Local boards attribute the longstanding, successful track record of Maryland's high performing public charter schools to the balance of autonomy and flexibility for charter school operators and a strong accountability role for local boards. By contrast, this bill would provide an ongoing, arbitrary amount of funding on a per pupil basis for all charter schools. In addition, the funds could be expended on a very broad range of activities, including charter school operator expenses for debt service payments, rent, maintenance, insurance, and any other expenses that the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC) determines were incurred by the school.

A related concern is that the bill does not appear to require any relationship between the funds received and projects undertaken and the school's charter agreement with the school system. Again, MABE opposes creating the Public Charter School Facility Fund because it would establish a uniform State funding program for all charter schools, without consideration for, or alignment with, local school system priorities, plans, and decisions. MABE does not believe that a separate funding stream or new departmental grant program are warranted or appropriate investments of limited State resources available for public education. Instead, local boards support maintaining the role of local school systems in reviewing and approving capital improvement requests from individual charter schools, consistent with the process for other public schools and established in charter agreements.

For these reasons, MABE urges an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 646.

# **SB 646\_ School Construction - Public Charter Schoo**

Uploaded by: Mary Pat Fannon

Position: UNF



**PSSAM**  
Public School Superintendents' Association  
OF MARYLAND

**Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director**  
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**BILL:** SB 646

**TITLE:** School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment

**DATE:** March 7, 2023

**POSITION:** Oppose

**COMMITTEE:** Budget & Taxation

**CONTACT:** Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

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The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four public school superintendents, **opposes** Senate Bill 646.

This bill creates the Public Charter School Facility Fund, administered by the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC), to provide funding to public charter schools for eligible expenses associated with public charter school facilities. The Governor must include an annual appropriation in the budget bill of \$2,000 per student enrolled in a public charter school (approximately \$48 million annually).

The Charter School law stipulates that charter schools are Maryland *public schools* under the auspices of their local education agency (LEA). However, PSSAM sees no reason to create a separate fund for these schools, especially with expanded uses not currently available to traditional schools. It is important to recall that capital funding for charters was specifically discussed and dismissed during the legislation deliberations that authorized charter schools. This legislation would mostly affect Baltimore City Public Schools, which hosts the majority of charters and is home to the oldest buildings in the State; however, this also affects other LEAs.

Many charters are located in underutilized or closed public schools. In this situation, since the buildings are owned by the local government or the LEA, these requests would be evaluated for capital needs and participate in the LEA's Capital Improvement Process (CIP). In doing so, they are prioritized just like the rest of the system's infrastructure. For charters that are using non-government owned buildings, the law allows for these schools and their operators to use creative financing to make complete capital projects or work with other organizations to address their

facility needs. This is also true for charters in government owned buildings - so these schools have two opportunities to be included and funded.

The Maryland public school construction program is overseen by the IAC. As part of the CIP process, the IAC receives a list of schools, by priority, from each local school board and the IAC then grades those projects and provides funding based upon available school construction dollars. Again, those charter schools that are housed in LEA-owned buildings are considered for inclusion into the priority list for funding.

Even though this would be “new” funding, it still would create possibility inequities within a system where a charter may receive funds ahead of a non-charter school in far worse condition because they are “competing” against a smaller number of projects, with a dedicated and known funding stream.

Every system has unmet capital needs and skyrocketing inflationary costs, creating new and more expensive costs for every capital project. These inflationary pressures further our opposition to carving out additional state funding for charter school facilities when there is already insufficient funding to support the current facility needs.

For these reasons, PSSAM **opposes** Senate Bill 646 and requests an unfavorable report.